

MACROBIUS

the saturnalia

[Book One]

TRANSLATED WITH AN
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

by Percival Vaughan Davies



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[Saturnalia](#), the Roman festival.

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TO THE MEMORY OF
ROBINSON ELLIS
SOMETIME PROFESSOR OF
THE LATIN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Nolis dicere nil valere nisum

translator's preface

THIS TRANSLATION of the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius was made from the text of Eyssenhardt's second edition (Teubner, Leipzig, 1893). By the time that the new Teubner text had been published, in 1963, the translation had been completed; but two readings proposed by its Editor have been adopted, and each has been duly acknowledged in a footnote.

The rest of the footnotes are of three kinds:

(1) Brief explanatory notes. (Two additional notes, too long for inclusion as footnotes, have been placed, as Appendix A and Appendix B, at the end of the translation.)

(2) References to passages in Greek and Latin authors and to certain books, to some of which an amateur of the classics might perhaps care to turn. These references are not meant to be anything like a full list of sources and parallels: for such information a reader should turn to Jan's edition and to the new Teubner text.

(3) References (*a*) to the medieval authors Bede and John of Salisbury, made because both writers used the *Saturnalia*; and (*b*) to Isidore of Seville, for his place as a connecting link between ancient and medieval scholarship.

A third appendix (Appendix C) contains references to lines in Homer, Lucretius, and Vergil, wherein the reading cited by Macrobius differs from that of the Oxford Classical Text.

In seeking to render into English the excerpts from Homer and Vergil the translator has chosen *stare super antiquas vias*; nevertheless he is not unaware that there are some who may well prefer versions in a modern idiom, and they have their remedy. The renderings here offered of these excerpts have little, if any, claim to originality, being for the most part recollections of earlier reading and borrowings from or adaptations of translations to be found in well-known works.

Columbia University Press has had the index compiled in ac-

cordance with its usual indexing standards and practices, utilizing material of a lengthier manuscript index prepared by the translator. The Editors of the series and the Press have determined, in accordance with the practice of other volumes in the series and with the requirements of space and expense, how much of the text of the original could be included in the translation.

In addition to a due recognition of the books named in the bibliography and notes, grateful acknowledgment is made of the help given throughout by Dr. Thomas A. Suits, who undertook the exacting task of "Special Editor" in the project and whose scholarship and taste have, time and again, come to the rescue.

P. V. D.

Tunbridge Wells, Kent
January, 1968

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INTRODUCTION

THE AUTHOR AND HIS WRITINGS

ALL THAT is known for certain of Macrobius is that he had a son, Eustachius, to whom he dedicated two of the works which pass under his name, and that he was not a native of Italy but had been "born under an alien sky"¹—the many references to Egypt in his *Saturnalia* suggesting that he may perhaps have been a native of that country.

In most of the manuscripts he is called *Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius* (the order of the names varies), *vir clarissimus et illustris*, and the official titles lend some probability to an identification of the man with the Macrobius to whom reference is made in the Theodosian Code as Vicar of Spain, 399 A.D., Proconsul of Africa, 410 A.D., and Grand Chamberlain (*praepositus sacri cubiculi*), 422 A.D.² It is not unlikely that he is the scholarly Theodosius to whom the fabulist Avianus (or Avienus) dedicated his work.³

Although the works of Macrobius contain no reference to Christianity, he may have been a Christian; and a holder of the office of *praepositus sacri cubiculi* would have had, officially, to accept the new State religion. But such official acceptance of Christianity by Macrobius would not necessarily be inconsistent with the genuine sympathy with the old religion, which his apparent connection with staunch supporters of paganism would seem to imply.⁴

Three works attributed to Macrobius are extant: excerpts from a

¹ *Saturnalia*, preface, 11. Stahl (pp. 4-5) summarizes the conjectures which have been made about Macrobius' birthplace.

² *Codex Theodosianus* 16. 10. 15; 11. 28. 6; 6. 8. 1. The Code also mentions a Macrobius who was fined in 400 A.D. for making unauthorized use of the public posting service (8. 5. 61), an abuse which the Macrobius of 16. 10. 15 was required, in 399, to check.

³ Robinson Ellis, ed., *The Fables of Avianus*, pp. xvii-xix, xxx.

⁴ Stahl, pp. 6-9. In this connection it may be noted that there are no traces of Christianity in the Fables of Avianus.

grammatical treatise (dedicated to a certain Symmachus) on the differences and affinities of the Greek and Latin verb; a Neoplatonist commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*; and a considerable part of a longer work, the *Saturnalia*.

THE SATURNALIA

The causes of the decline of Latin literature were many and by interaction would be cumulative in their effects. Perhaps the two most potent causes were the growing gap between the spoken and the written word (as Latin gradually developed into the Romance languages and dialects) and the discouraging of original creation by the retention of rhetoric, with its stock themes, as the staple of education long after such training had ceased to have much practical value.⁵

Certainly education under the Empire, so far from fostering original work, tended rather to stereotype literature and to produce that "cloud of critics, of compilers, of commentators" which, in Gibbon's view,⁶ at that time "darkened the face of learning". Nettleship, too, in a lecture on Aulus Gellius, with whose *Noctes Atticae* Macrobius would have been acquainted, has referred to "the passion for making epitomes, selections, *florilegia*, and miscellanies of all kinds" which "arose among the Romans in the first century after Christ, and continued in activity for a long subsequent period";⁷ and the *Saturnalia*, it must be confessed, is one of the results of this activity.

The work is in the form of an imaginary dialogue. In the preface to it the author says that his aim is to put his wide and varied reading at the disposal of his son and so to provide him with a store of

⁵ See H. Bardon, *La Littérature Latine Inconnue*, II, Chap. 6, who refers also to the absence of imperial or private patronage of letters, to the effects of the barbarian invasions, to the supersession of Rome as the administrative capital of the Empire, and to the hostility of Christianity to pagan literature. See also F. H. Dudden, *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*, I, 10-11.

⁶ E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chap. 2.

⁷ Nettleship, *Essays in Latin Literature*, p. 248.

useful information. He expressly disclaims any literary merit for the work, since it is intended to be no more than a collection of things which he considers to be worth knowing; and it would seem in fact to consist of extracts from notebooks containing excerpts from writers whom he had read.⁸ Like the *Noctes Atticae*, then, the *Saturnalia* has preserved much anonymous and other material which would otherwise have been lost; and, in addition to its value on this account, there is also the intrinsic interest of the Vergilian criticism and of the varied antiquarian lore which the book contains.⁹

THE CHARACTERS IN THE DIALOGUE

Of the twelve chief characters most, and—although there is no compelling evidence of this—quite possibly all, are real persons. Macrobius indeed admits that it is doubtful, in view of their ages, whether the interlocutors could actually have met, but he claims that in taking leave to make them meet for his dialogue, no less than in his use of the dialogue form, he is following the example of Plato (1. 1. 3. 5, and 6). He would seem, too, to have been at some pains to make the speakers fit their parts and to suggest individual characteristics; but there are also times when he forgets that he is writing a dialogue and would appear to be transcribing

⁸ Cf. the elder Pliny who *nihil ... legit quod non exciperet* (Pliny the Younger *Epistulae* 3. 5. 10). It is clear from his preface that Macrobius was not concerned to give chapter and verse for his borrowings; nor would such references have been of any great use to the young Eustachius. The criticism by Muretus (Jan, p. lviii), which compares Macrobius with plagiarists "*qui ita humani a se nihil alienum putant ut alienis aequae utantur ac suis*," is witty but irrelevant.

⁹ In the excerpts from Greek and Latin authors the text as cited in the *Saturnalia* often differs from the received text; and sometimes, too, the same passage from an author is cited differently at different points in the *Saturnalia*. This may be explained by the fact that the more popular the author, the greater was the number of manuscript copies of his work in circulation, and, consequently, the greater the number of variant readings. There is the further possibility that Macrobius at times may have been quoting from memory; (e.g., at 6. 6. 13, where, citing *Aeneid* 6. 405, he has *Aeneid* 4. 272 in mind). See Appendix C.

from notebooks for the benefit of his son.¹⁰

Of these twelve characters, half are prominent members of the Roman nobility (1. 1. 1)—three of them (Praetextatus, Symmachus, and Flavianus) being leaders of the “anti-Christian Fronde”—and the remaining six are men of learning, interested in the topics which they severally discuss; but, although Sidonius—in Gaul—could say, a hundred years or so later (*Epistulae* 8. 2), that culture was the sole criterion of nobility and, although, for the purpose of the dialogue, Macrobius refers to Flavianus and Eustathius as *par insigne amicitiae* (1. 6. 4; cf. 1. 5. 13) and represents Praetextatus as having invited Eusebius to take the place of Postumianus (1. 6. 2), it may be doubted whether—in Rome—all of these remaining six would have been on quite such intimate terms with the others as the dialogue might suggest.¹¹

Praetextatus

Vettius Agorius Praetextatus was a worthy representative of the last generation of paganism in the latter half of the fourth century. He is described by Ammianus Marcellinus as “a senator of noble character and old-time dignity”;¹² and by the same writer mention is made of the high distinction with which he discharged the office Prefect of the City (367 A.D.). It was as Prefect of the City that he put an end to the sanguinary dispute between Damasus and Ursinus for the papacy by banishing the latter.¹³

Reference is made in the *Saturnalia* to his serenity and strength

¹⁰ There are many references to a “reader,” but all are not necessarily incompatible with the dialogue; and the occasional use of the second person singular may often be accounted for by supposing that the speaker is addressing his host or his questioner. Nevertheless, in 1. 20. 6 and 16 and in 1. 23. 17 Macrobius would seem to be addressing his son; and *inserui* in 5. 4. 4, *transcribere* in 6. 2. 30, and the use, by a Greek speaker, of *noster* in 5. 21. 7 and *nos* in 5. 21. 17 can hardly be explained otherwise than as slips.

¹¹ Servius, as a grammarian, Eusebius, as a rhetorician, and Eustathius, as a philosopher, are introduced into the dialogue because so much of the *Saturnalia* is taken up with these aspects of Vergil’s works, and the contents of the seventh Book would account for the inclusion of the physician Disarius. See Appendix A: Doctors and Dons.

¹² Ammianus Marcellinus 22. 7. 6. Cf. Symmachus, who, writing of Praetextatus, says: *gaudia corporis ut caduca calcavit* (*Epistulae* 10. 12. 2).

¹³ Ammianus Marcellinus 27. 3. 12 and 9. 8-9.

of character (1. 5. 4)—a quality, however, sometimes accompanied in a Roman by a certain priggish self-consciousness and lack of humor—traits which Praetextatus is made to show, for example, in his rebuke to the young Avienus for seeming to disparage Socrates (2. 1. 4) and perhaps rather more certainly in his remark that his household gods would not approve of any entertainment that suggested a cabaret (2. 1. 7). His antiquarian interests are well illustrated by his discussion of the origins of the festival of the Saturnalia (1. 7-10) and of the Roman calendar (1. 12-16). His intimate knowledge of pagan religious observances—he is said to be *sacrorum omnium unice conscius* (1. 7. 17)—is illustrated both by his discourses on Vergil's acquaintance with pontifical law (3. 4-12) and by the long speech in which he explains that all the gods of Greek and Roman mythology represent the attributes of one supreme divine power—the sun (1. 17-23).¹⁴ A sepulchral monument¹⁵ records the sacred offices which he had held; and the same monument testifies also to his scholarship, for it tells of his services to letters in revising and emending the texts of Greek and Latin authors. Nevertheless, as presented in the *Saturnalia*, he gives the impression of being something of a pedant, and Evangelus has some grounds for taunting him with making a parade of his learning (1. 11. 1).

Symmachus

Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, statesman, orator, and man of letters, was a younger contemporary and a close friend of Praetextatus. An inscription to his memory records the offices which he held¹⁶ and refers also to his oratory, which was said by Prudentius to be more than a match even for Cicero's.¹⁷ His correspondence, drastically edited by his son, shows the remarkably wide circle of friends, both pagan and Christian, with whom he was intimate. He must have been a much pleasanter person than

¹⁴ On the monument referred to in the following note his wife, addressing him, says: *divumque numen multiplex doctus colis*.

¹⁵ CIL VI. 1779. See Ellis, *Avianus*, p. xxxii, and Glover, pp. 162-64. To Jerome, of course, Praetextatus was *miserabilis Praetextatus . . . homo sacrilegus et idolorum cultor* (*Contra Iohannem Hierosolymitanum* 8).

¹⁶ CIL VI, 1699.

¹⁷ Prudentius *Contra orationem Symmachi* 1. 632-34 (cf. 2. 55-58).

Praetextatus and the difference between the two is well exhibited¹⁸ by the difference between the tone of the famous third *Relatio*, addressed by Symmachus, as Prefect of the City in 384, to Theodosius for the restoration of the Altar of Victory (which had been removed from the Senate House by Gratian in 382) and that of the sarcastic reply of Praetextatus to Damasus:—"Make me bishop of Rome, and I will be a Christian straightaway."¹⁹

In the *Saturnalia* the oratorical style of Symmachus is described as rich and ornate (5. 1. 7), and it is he who undertakes to discuss the most striking examples of Vergil's use of rhetorical devices (1. 14. 14, and Book 4). Macrobius presents him as meeting the somewhat dull decorum of Praetextatus with a proposal that the company should amuse themselves after dinner by recalling witty and humorous sayings of men of old times (2. 1. 8); and he is introduced, appropriately, as relating a number of Cicero's jests (2. 3). Later (7. 1. 2) he views with some apprehension a suggestion by Praetextatus that the conversation *inter pocula* should be in no lighter vein than that which had preceded the dinner.

A *subscriptio* to a manuscript of the first Book of the *Commentary* records that one Aurelius Memmius Symmachus amended and punctuated his copy of the text with the help of one Macrobius Plotinus Eudoxius (i.e., the latter acting as the "counter-reader"); and this suggests the duration in a later generation of a friendship between the families of the Symmachus and the Macrobius of the *Saturnalia*.

Flavianus

Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, who too held a number of public offices, was a kinsman of Symmachus and the families were also connected by marriage. An inscription in which he is styled *historicus disertissimus* is evidence of literary tastes.²⁰ Like Prae-

¹⁸ As Ellis has remarked (*The Fables of Avianus*, p. xx).

¹⁹ Jerome *Contra Iohannem Hierosolymitanum* 8: "*Facite me Romanae urbis episcopum et ero protinus Christianus.*" And yet it would be less than fair to Praetextatus to overlook the evidence (CIL VI, 1779) of his happy union with his wife Paulina: *coniuncti simul vixerunt annos XL*.

²⁰ CIL VI, 1782. He may have been the author of the work *De vestigiis et dogmatibus philosophorum* (now lost) referred to by John of Salisbury in *Policraticus* 2. 26 (460b), 8. 11 (749a and 755a) and 8. 12 (758a and 761a). See Webb,

textatus and Symmachus he was a staunch supporter of the old Roman religion and gave his life for it at the battle on the Frigidus (394 A.D.).²¹

He is said by Macrobius to have surpassed even his father Venustus²² in the distinction of his character, the dignity of his life, and in the abundance and depth of his learning (1. 5. 13). In the proposed discussion on Vergil he promises to speak of the poet's knowledge of augural law²³ (1. 24. 17), but his contribution to that discussion (it probably formed part of the now incomplete third Book) has not survived. He is referred to in the dialogue as a friend of Eustathius, another character in the dialogue (1. 6. 4), and in the seventh Book he counters certain remarks made by his friend about the natural properties of wine (7. 6).

The Albini

Of the two Albini, politely described by Praetextatus as by far the most learned men of the time (6. 1. 1), Caecina is a contemporary of Symmachus (1. 2. 15) and is thought by Jan to be the Albinus mentioned in the prologue as the father of the Decius who is represented there as asking Postumianus for an account of the symposium—an account which, Decius says, but for his father's departure for Naples as soon as the holidays of the Saturnalia were over, he could have had from him (1. 2. 2-3). He is identified by Dill and Glover with the Publilius Caeonius Albinus, the pontiff who had a Christian wife and of whom Jerome speaks with respect.²⁴

I, 141; II, 294, 304, 309, and 314. He also wrote *Annales*, which were used by Ammianus Marcellinus; see Dill, p. 155.

²¹ "Nearly forty years after the battle on the Frigidus the Emperors Valentinian and Theodosius did justice to the virtues and distinction of Flavianus in a monument which is still extant" *CIL* VI, 1783; Dill, p. 20. For an account of the battle and a description of the terrain, see T. Hodgkin, *Italy and Her Invaders* (Oxford, 1885-99), I (2d ed.), 569ff. and Dudden, *Life and Times of St. Ambrose*, II, 429ff.

²² Perhaps the Vicar of Spain mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus (23. 1. 4 and 28. 1. 24).

²³ In the anonymus *Carmen contra paganos* the object of the attack (who, although not named, is generally supposed to be Flavianus) is called *Etruscis semper amicus*. See Dudden, II, 427n; H. Bloch, *The Last Pagan Revival in the West*, p. 230,n68; and, for the text, Riese, *Anthologia Latina, supplementum, pars prior (carmina in codibus scripta)*, p. 13.

²⁴ Dill, p. 14; Glover, p. 171; Jerome *Epistulae* 107. 1.

Both Caecina Albinus and Furius Albinus—the latter's name appears twice²⁵ in the manuscripts as Rufius—may perhaps be connected with the family of Albini mentioned by Rutilius Namatianus (c.416 A.D.).²⁶

In the *Saturnalia* Caecina's contribution to the conversation is to discuss the reckoning of the civil day at Rome (1. 3), substituted sacrifice (1. 7. 34), "sweetmeats" (2. 8. 3), and the luxury prevalent in Rome under the Republic (3. 13). This last topic is subsequently dealt with at greater length by Furius (3. 14-17). Both Caecina and Furius, in fulfillment of their undertakings (1. 13. 19), illustrate by quotations Vergil's debt to earlier Latin writers (6. 1-5); and in the seventh Book they put a number of questions of a physiological or physical nature to the physician Disarius (7. 8). In the seventh Book, too, Caecina recalls an account given by an authority on pontifical law of the origin of wearing a ring on the fourth finger of the left hand (7. 13. 11-16).

Avienus

Avienus cannot be identified with any certainty, but he may perhaps be the fabulist Avianus or Avienus—an identification which becomes more probable if the Theodosius to whom the *Fables* are dedicated may, as has been suggested, be taken to be the author of the *Saturnalia*.²⁷

He is represented in the dialogue as a worthy and modest young man (6. 7. 1; 7. 3. 23), with a fund of anecdotes (2. 4-7), but given to making impetuous interruptions (1. 6. 3; 2. 3. 14; 7. 2. 1) and whispered asides (1. 4. 1; 5. 7. 1)—a device which enables Macrobius to extend at need the scope of a discussion or to introduce a new topic (1. 5. 1-3; 1. 17. 1; 5. 1. 2 and 6; 5. 3. 16; 7. 3. 1).²⁸ And

²⁵ *Saturnalia* 1. 2. 16 and 1. 4. 1.

²⁶ *De reditu suo* 1. 167-76, 466-74.

²⁷ See above, note 3. Referring to the fact that much of the *Saturnalia* is taken up with a discussion of Vergil's poetry. Ellis observes (p. xiv) that "no remnant of Roman literature is more informed with the diction of Vergil than the *Fables*" [of Avianus], adding (p. xxxiv) that every fable has echoes or actual imitations of the *Aeneid*.

²⁸ A good example of this device is the neat touch by which in 7. 3. 1. Avienus puts to Eustathius the very kind of leading question which the latter had recommended in the previous chapter.

so it is that, when, at the end of the first day of the festival, some of the company undertake to discourse on various aspects of Vergil's genius, Avienus is made to say that he will not take it upon himself to speak about any of the poet's merits but rather will listen to what the others have to say and then offer such observations as it may occur to him to make (1. 14. 20; cf. 6. 7-9).

Servius

Servius, the famous commentator on Vergil (fl. 390), is introduced as a young man who has recently joined the ranks of the professional "grammarians" (1. 2. 15), remarkable for his learning (1. 24. 8; 6. 7. 2), and lovable for his modesty. His modesty and shyness are referred to elsewhere in the dialogue (2. 2. 12; 7. 11. 1), and so too are his lectures on Vergil (6. 6. 1). A discussion of certain linguistic forms (1. 4) and an explanation of Vergil's use of certain words, phrases, and grammatical constructions (6. 7-9) are naturally put into his mouth by Macrobius, together (less obviously) with the lengthy lists of fruits in the concluding chapters of the third Book. Nettleship has shown that Macrobius did not draw on Servius for his Vergilian criticism but that both Macrobius and the real Servius drew from the works of earlier commentators and critics.²⁹

Eustathius

Eustathius, who, Jan suggests, may perhaps be the Greek Neoplatonist Eustathius of Cappadocia, is described as a friend of Flavianus (1. 6. 4) and a learned philosopher (1. 5. 13; 7. 1. 8). His exposition of Vergil's knowledge of philosophy and astronomy, which was to open the proceedings of the second day of the Saturnalia (1. 24. 18 and 21), has not survived; but in the fifth Book of the dialogue he gives instances of lines and passages which Vergil has taken or adapted from Homer (5. 2-14) and makes a number of comparisons between the two poets (5. 15-17. 6). He also compares Vergil, to his disadvantage, with Pindar (5. 17. 7-14)

²⁹ In his essay, "The Ancient Commentators on Virgil."

and illustrates further the Roman poet's debt not only to Homer but also to many other Greek writers (5, 17. 15-5. 22. 15). He remarks too on Caesar's debt to the Egyptians and to the Greeks for the development of the Roman calendar (1. 16. 38-44); in the second Book, in connection with the use of wine and touching the pleasures of the senses, he refers to Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates (2. 8. 5-16); and, in the seventh Book, argues in favor of the discussion of questions of philosophy at table (7. 1. 5-24). The seventh Book also contains his observations on tact in conversation at dinner (7. 2 and 3) and his arguments with his fellow Greek, the physician Disarius, on a number of physiological subjects (7. 14-16).

Eusebius

Eusebius is an elderly (7. 10. 1) Greek rhetorician, who takes the place of the lawyer Postumianus at the symposium and later tells him what passed at it (1. 2. 7; 1. 6. 2). His discourse on Vergil's knowledge of oratory (to which reference is made in 1. 24. 14) may have formed part of the missing chapters at the end of the fragmentary fourth Book, for at the beginning of the fifth Book he is found discussing styles of oratory. In the seventh Book he considers certain concomitants of old age with the physician Disarius (7. 10). Jan suggests that he may be the Alexandrian rhetorician of that name.

Disarius

Disarius (who may be the *medicus* mentioned by Symmachus in the forty-third letter of the ninth Book of his *Letters*) was also a Greek (7. 5. 2; 7. 5. 4) and, like Eusebius, getting on in years (7. 10. 1). He is said to be the best of the medical profession in Rome (1. 7. 1), and Praetextatus, on whom he called in company with Evangelus and Horus (1. 7. 1), makes his presence the ground for proposing that the conversation after dinner on the last day of the Saturnalia shall touch on topics of medical interest (7. 4. 1-3). It is in the course of this conversation that the others in turn put to him the miscellaneous questions that make up the greater part of the seventh Book. As a follower of the physician and anatomist

Erasistratus, he sharply criticizes incursions by philosophy into the field of medicine (7. 15. 1) and thereby provokes a retort from the philosopher Eustathius (7. 15. 14).

Horus

Horus may possibly be the Orus referred to in a letter of Symmachus (2. 39) as "*philosophus ritu atque eruditione praecipuus*." He was, as his name would suggest, an Egyptian (1. 15. 4; 1. 16. 37; 7. 13. 9). After a successful career as a professional boxer he had, like Cleanthes, turned to philosophy (1. 7. 3) and, now a man of dignity and distinction (1. 16. 38), practiced the asceticism of a Cynic (7. 13. 17). In the first Book a question from him serves to introduce accounts by Praetextatus of the origins of the worship of Saturn (1. 7. 14) and of the Roman calendar (1. 15. 1); and it is some criticism by him (now lost) of the luxury of the time that leads to Caecina's reference to luxurious living under the Republic (3. 13. 16). In the seventh Book he makes the interesting remark that the practice of cremation had fallen into disuse (7. 7. 5).

Evangelus

Evangelus, who with Disarius and Horus called on Praetextatus after the other guests had assembled, is described as an impudent fellow with a bitter wit and a shamelessly caustic tongue, whose presence was likely to accord ill with a quiet gathering (1. 7. 2).³⁰ Finding himself in the presence of a large company who courteously rise as he enters, he greets Praetextatus with clumsy jocular-ity; but he is mollified by a polite invitation to join the party, with his two companions, and he takes no part in the conversation which immediately follows until references by Praetextatus to honors paid to slaves and to the origin of the festival of the Sigillaria make him charge his host with superstition and with seeking to show off his learning (1. 11. 1). Later, his call for more wine (2. 8. 4) serves to enable Macrobius to refer to Plato's remarks on

³⁰ Glover (p. 175) suggests that Evangelus may be the man of that name referred to in a letter of Symmachus (6. 7) as having an *animus incautus*.

the beneficial effect of wine at a dinner party and to what Aristotle and Hippocrates had to say about intemperance (2. 8. 5-16). In the seventh Book, Evangelus intervenes with a question about the human brain, designed to trap Disarius (7. 9), and afterward rudely interrupts an argument between Eustathius and Disarius with a mocking request to be told which came first, the egg or the hen (7. 16. 1). Disarius, however, in all seriousness puts the case for either proposition, and Evangelus then, referring to an incident which had occurred on his country estate at Tibur, asks why game goes bad more quickly in moonlight than in sunlight and why the insertion of copper nails checks such decomposition (7. 16. 15). But his chief role in the dialogue is to lead up to the criticism of Vergil and then to intervene from time to time (e.g., 3. 10-12; 5. 2. 1) with disparaging remarks. Thus it is that, when Praetextatus has come to the end of the long exposition (1. 17-23) which had been prompted by a reference to a line in the *Georgics*, he objects to Vergil's being called on to corroborate theological theories; and he objects, too, to an uncritical admiration of the poet, worthy only of a schoolboy. For Vergil, as he reminds his audience, thought so little of his *Aeneid* that he directed his executors to burn it, for fear, Evangelus suggests, of being blamed not only on moral grounds—for representing Venus begging from her lawful husband a gift of armor for her illegitimate son—but also on artistic grounds—for offenses against literary taste in the awkward arrangement of the poem and in his use of Greek words and outlandish expressions (1. 14. 1-7). However, the others present will have none of this. For them Vergil had taken all knowledge to be his province (1. 16. 12), and the conversation before dinner on the last two days of the Saturnalia is concerned with the poet's merits as they see them.

It appears that, in spite of his name, Evangelus is not a Greek, for, unlike the Greeks present on the occasion, he speaks of Vergil as "our poet" (1. 24. 2). The question, arising from his name, whether or not he was a Christian, cannot be answered with any probability one way or the other. But the name may have had associations with Christianity; and, if Evangelus was in fact a Christian,³¹ he would have been distasteful to an admirer of the

³¹ The charge of superstition which he brings against Praetextatus (1. 11. 1) may be of significance in this connection.

old religion. It is tempting therefore, and perhaps not unduly fanciful, to see in this unprepossessing character a reflection of Macrobius's own opinion of the Christians of his time.³²

THE DIALOGUE

After the preface and the explanatory chapter which follows it, the scene opens (1. 2. 15-20) on the eve of the festival of the Saturnalia, at the house of Praetextatus, who is at home to his friends and is discussing with Furius Albinus and Avienus the question of when, exactly, the festival is due to begin. Then Symmachus, Caecina Albinus, and Servius call, and a discourse by Caecina on the divisions of the civil day follows (1. 3), the rest of the evening being spent in the examination of certain grammatical usages (1. 4 and 5).³³

On the next day, the first day of the festival, Nicomachus Flavianus, Eustathius, and Eusebius join the company (1. 6. 4); and later, after Praetextatus has explained the origin of his own and certain other family names and of the custom of the wearing of the *toga praetexta* by boys (1. 6. 5-30), Evangelus, Disarius, and Horus arrive (1. 7. 1-13). The conversation now turns to the origin of the

³² Although there are examples of happy mixed marriages (see, e.g., Glover, p. 172), the positive principles of Christianity were, in the fourth century, much less evident than a narrow intransigence. The old religion, on the other hand, stood for disciplined tolerance and tradition and the maintenance of the *Pax Deorum*. The Senatorial opposition to Christianity had a firm regard for the legacy of the past—in the words of Furius Albinus (3. 14. 2), *vetustas nobis semper, si sapimus, adoranda est*—and no less firmly believed that departure from traditional observances would call down the wrath of the gods. It is not surprising, then, that Julian could refer to Constantine as *novator turbatorque priscarum legum et moris antiquitus recepti* (Ammianus Marcellinus 21. 10. 8).

³³ Great importance was attached to a correct use of the Latin language and the avoidance of any unusual word. Hence this discussion of grammatical forms and the reference in it to Caesar's insistence on "analogy" (1. 5. 2). See W. R. Hardie, *Lectures on Classical Subjects*, p. 279; and Aulus Gellius 19. 8; and cf. Quintilian 8. 3. Hence, too, Macrobius' apology in the preface (11) for any possible failure by him, as one "born under an alien sky," to do justice to the Latin idiom; although, if the Theodosius to whom the *Fables* of Avianus are dedicated is in fact the author of the *Saturnalia*, the apology was unnecessary, for in the preface to the *Fables* Theodosius is complimented on his mastery of Latin.

festivals of the Saturnalia and Sigillaria (1. 7. 14-1. 11), with the legends of Saturn and Janus, and with a long digression on the treatment and behavior of slaves. The chief speaker is Praetextatus, who continues with an account of the development of the Roman calendar (1. 12-16) and a detailed exposition of the theological doctrine of syncretism, which makes all the gods of the pagan pantheon manifestations of a single divine power, the sun (1. 17-23)—a doctrine which conveniently enables its holder to combine a profession of monotheism with the practice of polytheism.

A slighting remark by Evangelus (1. 24. 2) serves to introduce the main theme of the *Saturnalia*: Vergil's many-sided erudition. The poet had already been described as an authority on every branch of learning (1. 16. 12), and Symmachus and others now undertake to illustrate his knowledge of philosophy and astronomy, of augural and pontifical law, and of rhetoric and oratory; and, further, to exemplify his use of the works of earlier Greek and Latin writers (1. 24. 10-21). At this point the company go in to dinner.

The second Book records the conversation which follows, *inter pocula*. Symmachus suggests (2. 1. 15) that each of the diners in turn repeat a witty saying of some famous man of old; and, when the others have made their contributions (2. 2), he proceeds himself to relate a number of Cicero's jests (2. 3). Avienus then recalls certain *bons mots* attributed to Augustus and his daughter Julia and to certain others (2. 4-6), going on to tell the story of Caesar and Laberius and of the latter's professional rival Publilius Syrus, and referring also (in connection with the Roman stage of those days) to the rivalry of the actors Pylades and Hylas (2. 7). In the last chapter of the Book, the arrival of the dessert prompts some remarks by Flavianus and Caecina on "sweetmeats," and there follow references by Eustathius to Plato on the use of wine and to Aristotle and Hippocrates on indulgence in sensual pleasures—a discourse (2. 8) which ends abruptly, since the last part of the Book has been lost.

The third Book relates to proceedings at the house of Flavianus on the second day of the festival. The exposition by Eustathius on the scholarly Vergil's knowledge of philosophy and astronomy³⁴

³⁴ Knowledge which Quintilian (1. 4. 4) holds to be necessary for the understanding of poetry.

has not survived, nor has the account by Flavianus—which would have followed it—of the poet's knowledge of augural law (1. 24. 17 and 18); but the first twelve chapters of what is left of the third Book are devoted to the illustration of Vergil's acquaintance with the details of pontifical law.³⁵ In these chapters the speaker (Praetextatus) cites lines which refer, for example, to ceremonial purification by running water or by aspersion (3. 1) and shows (sometimes with etymological explanations)³⁶ the exactness with which Vergil brings out the ritual significance of a word or expression. The care with which he marks the ceremonial distinction made between the classes of sacrificial victims is also noted (3. 5), and the fact that he assigns to a god not only the sacrifice appropriate to that god but also the god's special style of address (3. 6). Moreover, such knowledge of the pontifical law is not obtruded but (with *docta elegantia*) is often indirectly and allusively revealed.³⁷ There is a gap after the twelfth chapter, for in the thirteenth the second course of the dinner is in progress, and Caecina Albinus, in reply to some comment by Horus on the luxury of their times (3. 13. 16), is arguing that earlier generations took much more thought for such pleasures. Furius Albinus then emphasizes Caecina's point by reference to the regard had under the Republic for skill in dancing (3. 14), to the high prices paid in those days for certain fish (3. 15-16), and to a long series of sumptuary laws (3. 17). Servius follows with a disquisition (which reads rather like a nurseryman's catalogue) on the various kinds of nuts, apples, pears, figs, olives, and grapes (3. 18-20); but this is brought to an end by Praetextatus, who remarks on the lateness of the hour and reminds the guests that the party will reassemble on the morrow, the third and last day of the festival, at the house of Symmachus (3. 20. 8).

Both the beginning and the end of the fourth Book have been lost, and what remains treats of the use made by Vergil of the rules of rhetoric.³⁸ The speaker would seem to Symmachus who enumer-

³⁵ Cf. W. Y. Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Augustan Age: Virgil*, p. 374.

³⁶ E.g., *religiosus* (3. 3. 8), *delubrum* (3. 4. 2).

³⁷ E.g., *cum faciam vitula pro frugibus* (*Eclogues* 3. 77), where the word *vitula* suggests the terms *vitulari* and *vitulatio*.

³⁸ Cf. Butler's *Hudibras* (Part I, Canto 1, line 89):

For all a Rhetorician's Rules

Teach nothing but to name his Tools.

ates the devices employed by the poet to depict or evoke emotions (πάθη).³⁹ By way of illustration a speech is analyzed (4. 2. 4-8),⁴⁰ and examples are given of rhetorical "figures" (4. 6. 9-24).

From the opening words of the fifth Book it appears that Symmachus was followed by Eusebius, and it is probable therefore that the fourth Book ended with the discourse which the latter had undertaken to give on Vergil as an orator (1. 24. 14). At any rate, at the beginning of the fifth Book, Eusebius is represented as having just ceased from speaking and, after refusing to be drawn into making a comparison between Vergil and Cicero⁴¹ as models for an orator, as going on to refer to four kinds of oratorical style, all of which (he maintains) are to be found in the poems of Vergil, who may be said to unite in himself the distinctive eloquence of each of the ten Attic orators (5. 1. 20). Evangelus, however, scoffingly takes leave to doubt whether Vergil, "a Venetian of peasant parentage," could have had any acquaintance with the literature of Greece (5. 2. 1) and so enables Macrobius, in the rest of the fifth Book and in the sixth, to illustrate at some length Vergil's knowledge of both Greek and Latin authors and the use which he made of it. The contents of these two books will be considered below, in the section dealing with the Vergilian criticism in the *Saturnalia*.

The seventh and last Book of the *Saturnalia*, like the second Book and chapters thirteen to twenty of the third, purports to record the after-dinner conversation of the company, and many of the topics discussed are taken from the *Quaestiones Convivales* of Plutarch.⁴² The first question posed is whether philosophy is suited to a convivial gathering (7. 1), and this is followed by a talk, by Eustathius, on tact at table (7. 2-3). The rest of the Book is devoted to the consideration of a wide variety of subjects, many of a nature which may be described, loosely, as "scientific": for example, whether a simple or a mixed diet is more easily digested

³⁹ Cf. Quintilian 6. 2. 8: πάθος, *quod nos vertentes recte ac proprie adfectum dicimus*.

⁴⁰ The speech of Juno in *Aeneid* 7. 293-320.

⁴¹ Cicero was to be considered on some future occasion (1. 24. 5)—possibly an indication that the *Saturnalia* is an earlier work than the *Commentary*.

⁴² According to Archbishop Trench in *Plutarch: His Life, His Lives, and His Morals, etc.* (London, 1873), these "questions" record actual conversations. See Glover, p. 173*n*.

(7. 4-5); why women rarely become drunk but old men readily (7. 6); why women feel the cold less than men (7. 7); what causes gray hair and baldness (7. 10), blushing and pallor (7. 11); why a ring is worn usually on the fourth finger of the left hand (7. 13); why fresh water is a better cleansing agent than sea water (7. 13); the nature of the nervous system (7. 9) and of vision (7. 14); which came first, the egg or the hen (7. 16); and some observations on the curative property of copper (7. 16). The abrupt ending of the Book suggests that the conclusion of the work has been lost.⁴³

THE VERGILIAN CRITICISM

The central topic in the *Saturnalia* is an appreciation of Vergil. A close acquaintance with the poet's works was part of the intellectual equipment of an educated Roman, and these works are discussed in three (4, 5, and 6) books and in certain chapters of two more (1 and 3) books of the seven of which the *Saturnalia*, as we have it, consists.

Suetonius in his *Vita Vergili* (s.43) says that Vergil had never lacked hostile critics, adding (no doubt with the *Homeromastix* of Zoilus in mind) that this was not surprising, since Homer too had had his detractors. Thus Carvilius Pictor wrote an *Aeneidomastix*; Vipsanius Agrippa censured Vergil as the inventor of a new kind of affectation in language (*novae cacozeliae repertor*); and Herennius published a list of his *Faults* (*Vitia*), Perellius Faustus of his *Thefts* (*Furta*) and Octavius Avitus of his *Resemblances* (*Ὅμοιότητες*), i.e., passages in Vergil reminiscent of passages in the works of other authors. On the other hand a *Reply to the Detractors of Vergil* was written by Asconius, and the poet may have had other friendly critics whose names have been lost. Since Vergil's poems, from the first, not only became a textbook for schools but also continued to supply teachers of grammar and rhetoric with material to illustrate their rules, these early critical

⁴³ It is noteworthy that the conversation in the *Saturnalia* never touches on contemporary politics.

works were for long current, and Nettleship has shown that Macrobius drew freely from them.⁴⁴

Literary criticism at Rome was essentially practical and regarded its objects from the outside; it would be unreasonable therefore to find fault with Macrobius for failing, as a critic, to do full justice to Vergil as a poet. Moreover, a critic after all is by way of being, as it were, a signpost, pointing only to those qualities in the object of his criticism to which he wishes to direct attention, and he may fairly be allowed to point to matter of his own choosing. It is clear, from the preface to the work, that the purpose of the *Saturnalia* was educational; and the aspects of Vergil's poems which interested Macrobius are those which are set out in the last chapter of the first Book.⁴⁵ With Vergil's poetry as such Macrobius was not primarily concerned, since he was deliberately dealing with the poet's technique and with the undertones of learning in the poems and not with subtle overtones of poetry. Nevertheless, much of what he, or the earlier critics whose works he has excerpted, has to say, and in particular the examination of passages which illustrate Vergil's debt to other writers,⁴⁶ contain valuable criticism and often show considerable judgment.

But the emphasis throughout is on Vergil's erudition and skills; and this is what might be expected, since literary criticism at Rome, whatever the nationality of the critic, did not attempt (as Greek criticism) to consider the ultimate nature and aim of poetry but reflected rather the utilitarian bent of the Roman character.⁴⁷ And indeed nearly all extant Latin poetry is written with a purpose—Catullus being, perhaps, the only Latin poet who could truly say, "I do but sing because I must"—nor could anything well be more utilitarian and prosaic than the very origin of existing Latin literature, which begins with a translation of the *Odyssey* written to serve as a textbook. Thus, except from time to time in literary coteries, achievement in letters was not held in any very great regard at Rome, and it is significant that Vergil does not even

⁴⁴ "On Some of the Early Criticisms of Virgil's Poetry."

⁴⁵ See, above, p. 3.

⁴⁶ See Appendix B: Originality, Imitation, and Plagiarism.

⁴⁷ E.g., Horace *Epistles* 2. 1. 162-63: "In the peace which followed the Punic wars the Roman began to ask himself whether Sophocles and Thespis and Aeschylus had anything to offer that was of *use*." Cf. the remark of the elder Pliny, that the Roman was "obstinately attached to virtue and utility."

include such excellence among the accomplishments which, if beneath the high calling of the Roman people, might yet be cultivated by "lesser breeds without the Law."⁴⁸

Not unconnected with this "practicalism" was the close connection of Latin poetry with scholarship, for what in Greece came to pass naturally was at Rome, to a great extent, consciously contrived. That is why to call a poet *doctus* was to pay him a high compliment; and, just as Servius begins his commentary on the sixth Book of the *Aeneid* with the words *totus quidem Vergilius scientia plenus est*, so for Macrobius Vergil is *omnium disciplinarum peritus* (1. 16. 12) and *poeta aequae in rebus doctrinae et in verbis sectator elegantiae* (3. 11. 9)—an authority in every branch of learning, whose aim it was to combine erudite subject matter with elegant diction.

The literary criticism in the *Saturnalia* begins with the fourth Book, which illustrates Vergil's command of the technique of rhetoric, and, since rhetoric played so important a part in Roman education, these illustrations would be of particular interest to the young Eustachius. In one of his minor poems⁴⁹ Vergil had bidden farewell to "the worthless paintpots of the rhetoricians and the tinkling cymbals of idle youth," but, although it is necessary always to bear in mind that, like much other Latin poetry, the poems of Vergil were written for reading aloud, the *Aeneid* leaves a reader today in no doubt but that the poet had remembered all that Epidius had taught him.⁵⁰ This fragmentary fourth Book may, indeed, reasonably be held to be the least readable part of the literary criticism, and yet among the quotations chosen to illustrate the devices of the rhetoricians are many of Vergil's best known and best loved lines.

The fifth Book opens with some remarks by Eusebius on the different kinds of oratorical style, with examples taken from Vergil's poems (5. 1). But in the rest of the Book the speaker is Eustathius, who had undertaken earlier to discuss Vergil's use of Greek models—a use of which he had then described as a cautious use and one which might even have the appearance of being accidental, since Vergil sometimes skillfully concealed the debt, although at other times he imitated his model openly (1. 24. 18).

⁴⁸ *Aeneid* 6. 847-53.

⁴⁹ *Catalepton* 5.

⁵⁰ Cf. H. W. Garrod, *The Oxford Book of Latin Verse* (Oxford, 1952), p. xxxvii: "How much of the *Aeneid* was written ultimately by Epidius I hardly like to inquire."

After suggesting that the *Aeneid* in effect may be regarded as a mirrored reflection of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (5. 2. 13), Eustathius goes on to quote a number of parallel passages, taken haphazard, in some of which Vergil's lines so closely resemble their Homeric originals that they merely show (in Professor Saintsbury's words)⁵¹ "that Vergil was an excellent translator, and was, rather more frequently than becomes a great poet, content simply to translate." The speaker then proceeds, book by book of the *Aeneid*, to make, without comments, a systematic survey of passages which are imitations of or translations from Homer (5. 4-10)—material which may have come from the *Resemblances* of Avitus to which Suetonius refers or from some similar critical work. This section of the Book is followed by three chapters of parallel passages, cited, with brief comments, to suggest that Vergil sometimes improves on his model (5. 11), sometimes equals it (5. 12), and sometimes falls short of it (5. 13). Thus, in the similes of the bees (5. 11. 2-4) Vergil is said to have shown a more careful observation of nature; and elsewhere (e.g., 5. 11. 10-13 and 23) it is suggested that his renderings contain a greater wealth of detail and are closer to reality. On the other hand, there are times when his verse seems to be somewhat meager in comparison with Homer's (e.g., 5. 13. 1 and 26) or to lack his model's vivid touches, as in the descriptions of the chariot races (5. 13. 3) and the foot races (5. 13. 4 and 5) and in the similes of the waves (5. 13. 20 and 21). Moreover, in the incident of the eagle and the serpent (5. 13. 28-30) Vergil has omitted details which, in the speaker's submission, are the very soul of Homer's description, with the result that in the Latin "only a lifeless body is left." Vergil is censured, too, for inaptly describing the spreading of a rumor in terms which Homer had applied to the growth of strife, since strife and rumor are not comparable and Vergil's comparison is therefore inappropriate (5. 13. 31 and 32).

After a somewhat technical discussion, reminiscent of the lecture room, of apparently unmetrical lines (5. 14. 1-4), examples are cited from Homer and Vergil of lines which would seem to differ in no way from the language of everyday speech (5. 14. 5) and of the effective use made by each poet of a repeated phrase (5. 14. 6),

⁵¹ Saintsbury, *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*, I, 332; see also his *A Second Scrap Book*, p. 250, and *A Last Scrap Book*, p. 71 (London, 1923 and 1924).

a compound epithet (5. 14. 7-8), and a narrative of past events (5. 11-15).

When the "catalogues" are considered, Homer's geographical arrangement is preferred to Vergil's disregard of any such methodical order, and the former's consistency in his references to individual persons to the latter's not infrequent inconsistency (5. 15. 1-13); but no attempt is made to excuse Vergil's inconsistencies on the ground that the *Aeneid* lacked its author's revision. Credit is given to Vergil for varying the form of words with which he introduces his Italian chieftains,⁵² but it is submitted that, although Homer too can show a comparable variety, his normally simpler technique well becomes a poet of an earlier age (5. 15. 14-19).

Proverbial sayings are met with both in Homer and in Vergil (5. 16. 6-7); and Vergil, like Homer, will sometimes, by way of relief, introduce a narrative or some other matter calculated to please the mind or the ear (5. 16. 1-5)—although there are times, too, when each poet treats the same story or myth in different ways (5. 16. 9-14).

The unrealistic account, in the seventh Book of the *Aeneid*, of the beginnings of the war in Italy is attributed to a need to improvise for lack of a model in Homer or some other Greek (5. 17. 1-4); and the reference to "some other Greek" serves to introduce comments on Vergil's debt both to Apollonius Rhodius—from whose story of Medea he adapted the story of Dido (5. 17. 4-6)—and to Pindar, for a description of Etna in eruption—a description which (in a detailed criticism also to be found in Aulus Gellius)⁵³ is condemned as clumsy and "unnatural" (5. 17. 7-14).

Examples are then given of Vergil's use of proper names from the Greek and of Greek inflexions to illustrate his devotion to the Greek language (5. 17. 15-20), the book ending with instances of recondite allusions, cited by Macrobius to show that the poet's learning embraced all the literature of Greece (5. 18-22).

The sixth Book begins with an account by Furius Albinus of Vergil's debt to the earlier writers of Rome, the speaker quoting,

⁵² For a criticism of the style of Vergil's catalogue, see E. Fraenkel, "Some Aspects of the Structure of *Aeneid* vii, *Journal of Roman Studies*, XXXV (1945), 1-14.

⁵³ Aulus Gellius 17. 10. Common subject matter is not necessarily an indication that Macrobius has borrowed from Aulus Gellius; each may have drawn from a common source. See Nettleship, *Essays in Latin Literature*, pp. 264ff.

first, lines taken wholly or in part from these writers (6. 1) and then comparing whole passages (6. 2). Furius explains that his aim is to show the good use which Vergil has made of his reading of the works of his predecessors; but he is aware, he says, that he may be affording hostile critics an excuse to accuse Vergil of plagiarism,⁵⁴ and he therefore carries the war into the enemy's country by referring to the reply made by Afranius when he was charged with having borrowed too freely from Menander, and by suggesting that in fact it is the old writers who are in Vergil's debt, since his use of their works has enabled those works to survive. Moreover, he continues, Vergil has shown such nice judgment and skill in his borrowings that to read the originals is to realize that their words sound better in their new than in their former context (6. 1. 2-6). Furius Albinus then goes on to point out that Vergil has sometimes borrowed from Homer at one remove by imitating lines of Ennius or of some other of his predecessors who had taken them from the Greek. And he ends by begging his hearers not to underestimate the writings of these early Latin poets on account of the roughness of the versification, for, thanks to the labors of succeeding ages, it is from them that the later, more smoothly woven, verse derives (5. 3. 9).

Caecina Albinus follows Furius. First, he illustrates Vergil's debt to the old poets for single words which, from a neglect of these old writers, were sometimes thought to be Vergil's own invention, drawing attention also to the poet's use of even foreign words (*peregrina verba*); and he concludes by citing a number of picturesque epithets which also have been borrowed by Vergil from earlier Latin authors (6. 4-5).

The conversation is then carried on by Servius, with comments on certain unusual expressions and constructions. These are for the most part Vergil's own and may perhaps be examples of the "affectation" criticized by Agrippa and of the "faults" censured by Herennius: among them are examples of "figures," which by a more careful arrangement of this Vergilian section of the *Saturnalia* might have been included in the fourth Book (6. 6).⁵⁵ The section

⁵⁴ Macrobius here is probably excerpting from a reply to the *Furta* of Perellius Faustus or to a similar work by a hostile critic. See also Appendix B.

⁵⁵ Probably Macrobius was transcribing notes taken by him from the works of two separate authors.

ends with an explanation by Servius (largely etymological)⁵⁶ of some words and constructions the meaning of which was often misunderstood (6. 7-9).⁵⁷

THE SATURNALIA IN THE MIDDLE AGES

In the fourth century the hostility of a Christian "Establishment" at first provoked in the pagan opposition a revival of interest in the classical writers of Rome. Then the growing pressure of the barbarian invasions brought home to Christian and pagan alike the need to safeguard a common cultural inheritance in the face of a common enemy and so led to a measure of that peaceful coexistence for which Symmachus had pleaded. Later, ironically enough, it was the Christian monasteries—scornfully referred to by Rutilius as slave-barracks (*ergastula*)⁵⁸—that preserved many of the precious relics of Latin literature through the long "Gothic night" of the Middle Ages until their rediscovery, for the most part by laymen, at the dawn of the Italian⁵⁹ Renaissance.

The influence of the works of Macrobius upon the writers of the Middle Ages is discussed at length by Stahl in the introduction to his translation of the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*.⁶⁰ It is proposed therefore to mention here only three names—writers who were concerned more with the *Saturnalia* than with the *Commentary*.

Isidore of Seville

Isidore of Seville (c.560-636), a link between the learning of antiquity and the Middle Ages, in the fifth Book of his *Etymo-*

⁵⁶ A combination of grammatical with literary exposition is characteristic of Latin literary criticism. See W. R. Hardie, *Lectures on Classical Subjects*, p. 280, and note 33, above.

⁵⁷ The same material is also discussed by Aulus Gellius (2. 6; 5. 8; 10. 11; 16. 5 and 6; 18. 5. The rest of Book 6 has been lost.

⁵⁸ Rutilius Namatianus *De reditu suo* 1. 447.

⁵⁹ Of the countries of Europe, only Italy had always had an educated laity—a legacy from educated paganism. See F. W. Hall, *Companion to Classical Texts* (Oxford, 1913), p. 96; and Momigliano, ed., *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, pp. 213-17.

⁶⁰ Stahl, pp. 42-55.

logiae may be making use of the accounts given by Macrobius in the *Saturnalia* of the divisions of the civil day at Rome (1. 3), of the *magnus annus* (1. 14), and of the Kalends, Nones, Ides, and other days of the Roman calendar (1. 15-16). There are references in Isidore's eleventh Book to the ring finger (the *digitus medicinalis*) and to the derivation of the word *pollex*, which are comparable with what Macrobius has to say (7. 13. 7 and 14); and, in the thirteenth Book (13. 16. 4), to the fresh waters of the Black Sea, which are referred to by Macrobius (7. 12. 34). Again, passages in the nineteenth and twentieth Books of the *Etymologiae* (19. 1 and 2; 20. 5) suggest acquaintance with the chapter in the *Saturnalia* (5. 21) in which the names of various kinds of drinking vessels are discussed. Nevertheless, the possibility that Macrobius and Isidore have drawn from a common source—e.g., Athenaeus in the case of the drinking vessels—cannot be overlooked.

Bede

Bede⁶¹ (673-735) is said to have had access to an abridgment of the *Saturnalia* known as the *Disputatio Hori et Praetextati*, of which traces may be found in the references in chapters 7, 9, 12 and 13 of his *De temporum ratione* to the Roman day, the Roman month, and the Kalends, Nones, and Ides (*Saturnalia* 1. 3 and 12-15). There is, however, no evidence, in chapter 28 of Bede's work, that he had read what Macrobius (7. 16), following Plutarch, has to say about the influences of the moon.

John of Salisbury

In the *Policraticus* (*sive De Nugis Curialium et Vestigiis Philosophorum*)⁶² of John of Salisbury (d. 1180) there are numerous excerpts from the *Saturnalia* often reproduced verbatim,⁶³ although words or passages in Greek are omitted. As Jan and Webb have re-

⁶¹ See *Bedae opera de temporibus*, ed. C. W. Jones.

⁶² See Webb. With the subtitle cf. the *De nugis curialium* of Walter Map.

⁶³ References, by book and chapter (and by the column in Migne) are given in the footnotes in the translation.

marked,⁶⁴ John appears to have had a more complete text of the *Saturnalia* than that which we have today; for in Book 8 (chapters 6, 7, and 16) of the *Policraticus* there are references to statements made by one "Portunianus"—now generally taken to be the Postumianus who reports to Decius the account given to him by Eusebius of what had been said at the symposium (*Saturnalia* 1. 2. 1-14)—which must have been taken from parts of the text of the *Saturnalia* no longer extant,⁶⁵ as well as a sentence (described as a quotation from Macrobius) which would seem to fit into the lacuna at the end of the second Book.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Jan, I, 1-11; Webb, I, xxxviii; see also Webb's article, "On Some Fragments of Macrobius' *Saturnalia*."

⁶⁵ See Webb, II, 254, *n*7; 256, *n*12; 257, *n*17; 263, *n*13 and *n*21); 264, *n*3; 268, *n*14, 270, *n*3.

⁶⁶ Webb, II, 341, *n*11.

the saturnalia • BOOK 1

PREFACE

[1] Many and various, Eustachius my son, are the things on which in this life of ours Nature has led us to set our affections; but of all Nature's ties the strongest is our love for our children, and it is her will that we should take such pains to train and instruct them that nothing else could give a parent so much pleasure as to succeed in these aims and nothing so much distress as to fail. [2] That is why I too regard your education as my chief care. In seeking to make it complete I have preferred the short cut to the roundabout route and, impatient of all delay, instead of waiting for you to make your own way forward through those studies, and only those, on which you are yourself diligently engaged, I purpose to put my own reading as well at your disposal. In this way the whole of the material carefully gathered by my labors, after your birth and before it, from a number of different works in Greek or Latin will furnish you with knowledge; and, if ever you have occasion to call to mind some historical fact, buried in a mass of books and generally unknown, or some memorable word or deed, it will be easy for you to find it and produce it, as it were, from a literary storehouse. [3] Moreover, things worth remembering have not been heaped together in confusion, but a variety of subjects of different authorship and divers dates have been arranged to form, so to speak, a body, in such a way that the notes which I had made without any plan or order, as aids to memory, came together like the parts of a coherent whole.

[4] You should not count it a fault if I shall often set out the borrowings from a miscellaneous reading in the authors' own words (for the present work undertakes to be a collection of matters worth knowing, not a display of my command of language), but be content with information of things of ancient times,

sometimes set out plainly in my own words and sometimes faithfully recorded in the actual words of the old writers, as each subject has seemed to call for an exposition or a transcript.

[5] We ought in some sort to imitate the bees;¹ and just as they, in their wanderings to and fro, sip the flowers, then arrange their spoil and distribute it among the combs, and transform the various juices to a single flavor by in some way mixing with them a property of their own being, [6] so I too shall put into writing all that I have acquired in the varied course of my reading, to reduce it thereby to order and to give it coherence. For not only does arrangement help the memory, but the actual process of arrangement, accompanied by a kind of mental fermentation which serves to season the whole, blends the diverse extracts to make a single flavor; with the result that, even if the sources are evident, what we get in the end is still something clearly different from those known sources.

[7] We see nature acting in this way in our own bodies without any effort on our part, since the food we take is a heavy burden to the stomach for as long as it remains in its original state and floats there in a solid mass, but when it has been transmuted, then, and not until then, it passes into the blood and strengthens us. And so it is with the food of the mind: we must see to it that we do not allow what we have absorbed to remain unchanged and thus fail to assimilate it, but we must, as it were, digest it. To do otherwise is to feed the memory, not the mind.

[8] Let us gather then from all sources and from them form one whole, as single numbers combine to form one number. Let our minds aim at showing the finished product, but conceal all that has helped to produce it; just as the makers of scented unguents take special care to ensure that their preparations have the property of no one scent but blend the essence of all the odors into a single perfume. [9] Or take a choir: it consists, as you see, of many voices and yet all those voices form a unity; for in a choir one voice is high, another low, another of the middle register; there are men's voices and the voices of women, and among them the notes of the pipe; and yet, although individual voices do not emerge, the voices of all are heard and from a number of different sounds there comes a harmony.

¹ Seneca *Epistulae* 84; John of Salisbury 7. 10 (660a-b).

[10] This, then, is what I would have this present work be: a repository of much to teach and much to guide you, examples drawn from many ages but informed by a single spirit, wherein—if you refrain from rejecting what you already know and from shunning what you do not—you will find much that it would be a pleasure to read, an education to have read, and of use to remember; [11] for, to the best of my belief, the work contains nothing that it is either useless to know or difficult to comprehend, but everything in it is calculated to quicken your understanding, to strengthen your memory, to give more dexterity to your discourse, and to make your speech more correct—except in so far as the genius of the Latin language may in places prove to be a stumbling block to me born under an alien sky. [12] And so, if after all there happen at times to be some with the leisure and the will to make the acquaintance of my work, from them I would seek, and would hope to win, a reasonable indulgence, should my words lack the elegance of the native Roman tongue.²

[13] But here I am indeed imprudent, and I have incurred that neat rebuke which Marcus Cato³ gave to the Aulus Albinus who was consul with Lucullus. [14] This Albinus composed a *History of Rome* in Greek and wrote in the preface to the effect that no one ought to criticize him for any lack of arrangement, or faults of style, “for,” said he, “I am a Roman, born in Latium, and the Greek language is altogether foreign to me”; and on that ground he claimed the privilege of being excused from censure for any mistakes he might have made. [15] After reading this, Marcus Cato said: “Upon my word, Aulus, you carry your trifling too far in choosing to apologize for a fault instead of refraining from committing it. As a rule, one asks for pardon after making a mistake through inadvertence or after doing wrong under compulsion; but who, pray, compelled you to do that for which you would ask pardon in advance?”

[16] And I shall now proceed to indicate the theme of the work in the form, as it were, of a prologue.

² Cf. the apology to the reader in the preface to the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius.

³ Aulus Cellius 11. 8. See also Cicero *Brutus* 81.

CHAPTER I

[1] During the festival of the Saturnalia leading Roman nobles, and some scholars with them, meet at the house of Vettius Praetextatus and devote the annual celebration to conversation on matters relating to the liberal arts, inviting each other in turn to dinner, in friendly hospitality, and separating only for repose at night. [2] For the whole of the rest days¹ the better part of the day is devoted to serious discussions, but at dinner their talk is on topics that become the festive board. In this way there is always some subject under review the whole day long, for learned treatment or light, although the conversation at table will of course take a more jovial turn, as having pleasure for its aim rather than some earnest purpose. [3] Certainly in Plato's well-known *Symposium* (as in the works of other writers who have described such banquets) the conversation of the guests does not touch on any matter of graver import, but the theme is love, treated with diversity and charm; and Socrates indeed here, so far from seeking as usual to press his opponent hard and to tie him up in tighter and tighter knots, seems to be engaging in a sham fight rather than a battle and all but giving his victims the chance to slip away and escape.

[4] Now the table talk, while decent and above reproach, must also be attractive and pleasant, but the morning discussions will be of sterner stuff, as befitting men of learning and distinction. And, if in the writers of old a Cotta, a Laelius, and a Scipio² shall continue to discuss matters of the highest importance for as long as Roman literature shall endure, surely a Praetextatus, a Flavianus, an Albinus, a Symmachus, and a Eustathius, men of like distinction

¹ Fowler, *Essays*, p. 79.

² See Cicero *De natura deorum*, *De re publica*, *De amicitia*, *De senectute*.

and no less worth, may be permitted to express themselves in the same way.

[5] I trust too that no one will think that I am acting unfairly if one or two of the characters who meet reached maturity a generation later than Praetextatus, for the dialogues of Plato prove that this license is permissible.³ Thus Parmenides, for example, lived so long before Socrates that the latter as a boy could hardly have met the former in his old age, and yet they are represented discussing certain abstruse problems together; and a famous dialogue is wholly taken up with a discussion between Socrates and Timaeus, although it is well known that the two men did not belong to the same generation. [6] Again, Plato makes Paralus and Xanthippus, the sons of Pericles, converse with Protagoras on his second visit to Athens, notwithstanding the fact that long before that time, the two had been carried off by the disastrous plague at Athens. Thus, with the example of Plato to support me, it has seemed inappropriate to go to the length of reckoning on my fingers the ages of the persons whom I have brought together.

[7] To enable the words of each speaker to be more easily recognized and distinguished, I have introduced Decius questioning Postumianus about the talks and the participants in them. But now, not to keep the reader any longer from what he is waiting for, the conversation between Decius and Postumianus will explain how the colloquy began and how it progressed.

³ Cf. Athenaeus 11. 505f.

CHAPTER 2

[1] The rest days, said Decius, which we enjoy for much of the month of January have come conveniently; for I have been looking for a chance to meet you, Postumianus, and for the most favorable opportunity of questioning you, since on pretty well every other day, as being a day for legal business, it is impossible to find a single hour in which you are not engaged, either speaking on behalf of your clients' cases in court or considering them at home. But now—for I know that you devote this leisure to serious matters and not to trifles—if you will be so good as to answer the questions which I have come to ask, you will have done something which will not only, I think, give you pleasure but will certainly win my warmest thanks.

[2] The first thing that I want to know is whether you were present at the dinner party which a succession of hosts hospitably prolonged for several days, and whether you took part in a conversation to which, so I hear, you give the highest praise and commend to everybody in the most complimentary terms. I should have heard of that conversation from my father but for the fact that, when those famous parties were over, he left Rome for Naples, where he is now staying. However, I have lately met others, who have spoken with admiration of that powerful memory of yours, which has enabled you more than once to recount in order everything that was said on that occasion.

[3] My dear Decius, said Postumianus, all my life—as you can have seen for yourself, so far as your age permits, and can have heard from your father Albinus—all my life, the one thing to my mind most worth while has been to devote such leisure as I may have had from my work at the bar to meeting men of learning, like yourself, and to talking with them; [4] for nowhere can the

educated mind find more useful or more seemly relaxation than in taking some opportunity for learned and polite conversation and friendly discussion. [5] But as for this dinner party of which you speak, you refer, no doubt, to the occasion on which the most learned of our nobility and the others who were with them recently met at the house of Vettius Praetextatus, and, by parting only to meet again at the house of another of the guests, gave a pleasant variety to their proceedings?

That, replied Decius, is just what I am here to ask about. Please describe the party, for all the guests are such close friends of yours that I am sure that you were there.

[6] I should have been glad to be there, said Postumianus, and indeed I do not think that my presence would have been unwelcome. But at the time I had a number of cases to examine which concerned friends of mine, and so, when I was asked to the dinner, I replied that I should have to spend the holidays in study rather than in dining, and I suggested that another, with no business cares to engage and occupy him, should be invited instead. That is what was done; [7] for Praetextatus gave instructions for an invitation to be sent to the rhetorician Eusebius in my place—a ready speaker and an accomplished man, one who, among the Greeks, is superior to all practicing rhetoric to-day and one who is well versed in Latin studies too.

[8] How then, said Decius, do you come to know what passed—those topics which, they tell me, were propounded and discussed in so pleasant and friendly a fashion, with abundant illustrations of value for the conduct of life and with a wealth of many-sided learning?

[9] The day of the winter solstice, replied Postumianus, that is to say, the day which followed the festival of the Saturnalia when those dinner parties were held, I was spending at home, all the more pleasantly since I had no legal business in court. Eusebius called, accompanied by a few of his pupils, and said at once, with a smile: [10] "I confess, Postumianus, that I have much to thank you for, and not least for this, that in begging to be excused by Praetextatus you made room for me at his table; so that I find not only your kindness but fortune herself too combining in my favor to win for me a benefit from you." [11] "Well," said I, "won't you repay the debt you have so kindly and generously acknowledged

and enable me to spend this all too rare leisure of mine in such a way as to imagine that I am one of the company now in which you found yourself then?" [12] "Indeed I will," said he, "I shall not tell of the food and the wine—both were plentiful without being extravagant—but I shall recall to the best of my ability what was said by the guests when they met, and especially what they said when not at dinner, in the course of those days. [13] When I listened to that conversation, I thought that I was entering the life of those whom philosophers speak of as the Blessed. And I learnt too of what had passed on the day before I joined the company, from Avienus, who told me of it. I have put all into writing, that nothing be forgotten and omitted; but, if you wish to hear my account of it, you must not suppose that a single day will be enough to recall what it took so many days to say." [14] What then, said Decius, was the conversation which Eusebius reported? Who took part in it, and how did it begin? Here I am, all attention, a listener who will not grow tired.

[15] Toward evening on the day before the festival of the Saturnalia, replied Postumianus, Aurelius Symmachus and Caecina Albinus, closest of friends by reason of their age, their habits, and their pursuits, called on Vettius Praetextatus, who was at home to all who wished to meet at his house; and Servius, who had recently joined the ranks of the professional grammarians, a man as remarkable for his learning as he is lovable for his modesty, was close behind them, walking with his eyes fixed on the ground after the manner of one who wished to pass unnoticed. [16] As soon as he saw his visitors, Praetextatus went forward to meet them and greeted them warmly; then, turning to Furius Albinus who, together with Avienus, happened to be in the house, he said: What do you say, Albinus? Our friends, whom we shall do right to call the leading lights of Rome, have come, as you see, at just the right time. Shall we tell them of the matter which we had begun to discuss? [17] Why not? replied Albinus. There is nothing that I should like better, for nothing could give them or us greater pleasure than to debate some learned topics.

[18] My dear Praetextatus, said Caecina, when all were seated, I am as yet unaware of the matter to which you refer; but I am quite sure that it is well worth knowing, since the rest of you have been discussing it and you refuse to leave us out of the discussion.

[19] You must know, then, replied Praetextatus, that the subject of our talk was this. Tomorrow will be the first of the days dedicated to Saturn. But when are we to say that the festival of the Saturnalia begins? or, in other words, when are we to suppose that tomorrow begins? [20] We have indeed touched lightly on some small points that bear on the question; but your researches in the written authorities are too well known for your modesty to deny, and so I would have you proceed to set out for the benefit of us all everything that you have learned and know about the subject of our inquiry.

CHAPTER 3¹

[1] There is, I see, said Caecina, no need for me to tell people what they know already, for you have yourselves learned everything and forgotten nothing of all the work of our predecessors on the matter which you invite me to speak about. But I should be sorry if anybody were to think that I felt the honor of being asked for my opinion to be a burden, and so I will briefly recount whatever my all too poor memory shall bring to mind. Then, as soon as he saw that all were ready and eager to hear him, he began as follows.

[2] Marcus Varro in his work on *Human Antiquities*,² writing of days, says: "Persons who are born in the course of the twenty-four hours between one midnight and the next are said to have been born on one and the same day." [3] These words suggest that he so divided the reckoning of a day that the birthday of a man born after sunset but before midnight is the day which preceded the night, but that, on the other hand, the birthday of one born during the last six hours of the night is held to be the day which dawned after that night. [4] Varro also wrote in the same book that the Athenians have a different method of reckoning and say that the whole interval of time between one sunset and the next is a single day; and that the Babylonians have yet another rule, for they call the period from one sunrise to the beginning of the next sunrise a day; and, as for the Umbrians, they say that the interval between one midday and the next is one and the same day; [5] "but this," says Varro, "is too absurd, for the birthday of an Umbrian born at

¹ In connection with this chapter see Isidore of Seville 5. 30-31 and Bede *De temporum ratione* 7.

² Aulus Gellius 3. 2.

the sixth hour on the Kalends of a month will have to be regarded³ as comprising half of the first day of the month and up to the sixth hour of the second."

[6] There is plenty of evidence to show that the Romans, as Varro said, reckoned each day as running from one midnight to the next; for of the religious ceremonies held at Rome, some are "diurnal," others "nocturnal"—the term "diurnal" being taken to cover any ceremonies held between the beginning of a day and midnight, but any which begin after the sixth hour of the night being taken to belong to the "nocturnal" ceremonies of the following day.⁴

[7] Moreover, the ritual practice in connection with the taking of auspices also points to the same method of reckoning; for, since the magistrates must, on one and the same day, both take the auspices and perform the act touching which the auspices have previously been taken, they take the auspices after midnight and perform the act after sunrise; and thus they are said to have taken the auspices and performed the act on the same day.

[8] Again, if the tribunes of the people, who may not be absent from Rome for a whole day, leave the city after midnight and return after "first torchlight" but before the midnight following, they are not regarded as having been away for a day, because by returning before the sixth hour of the night they spend a part of that day in Rome.

[9] Furthermore, I have read that the jurist Quintus Mucius used to say that a woman who began to cohabit with a husband on the first of January and left him on the twenty-seventh of December following,⁵ in order to interrupt the husband's possession, had not interrupted it, because the three nights' absence from her husband, required by the Twelve Tables to effect the interruption,⁶ could

³ I.e., by Roman reckoning.

⁴ Reading (with Bornecque) *et ea quae diurna sunt ab initio diei ad medium noctis protenduntur; ab hora sexta noctis, sequentis [sc. diei] nocturnis sacris tempus impenditur*. The text is corrupt. The distinction would seem to be between acts which have to be performed in the course of a day of twenty-four hours (running from midnight to midnight) and acts performed at night between midnight and the following daybreak.

⁵ *A.d. iv Kal. Ian.*, December then having only twenty-nine days.

⁶ One of the ways in which a marriage could be contracted at Rome in early times was by *usus*, i.e., by the continuous cohabitation of a man and woman as husband and wife. If the *usus* lasted without interruption for a year,

not be completed, since the last six hours of the third night belonged to the following year, which would begin on the first of January.

[10] Vergil, too, suggests the same method of reckoning, but (as became a poet) by means of an indirect and veiled allusion to an old established practice, in the lines:

The dank night wheels her course midway, and now I feel
the breath of the cruel steeds of dawn [Aeneid 5. 738]
for with these words he reminds us that what at Rome is called the civil day begins to run from the sixth hour of the night.

[11] In the sixth Book of the *Aeneid* too the poet has described the time when the night begins, for he says:

Dawn with her rose-red car even now had passed in her
heavenly course the middle of the sky⁷ [Aeneid 6. 535]
and a few lines later the sibyl added:

Aeneas, night comes on apace, and we but spend the hours in
weeping. [Aeneid 6. 539]
Thus Vergil's description of the beginnings of the day and the night is in the closest conformity with the definitions of the civil law.

[12] The divisions of the civil day are these: first, "the middle turning point of the night"; then "cock crow"; after that, "the silence", when the cocks are silent and men are still asleep; then "first light", when day becomes discernible; after that, "morning" (*mane*), when the light of day is clear. [13] Now we use the word *mane* either because daylight begins to rise from the world below, that is to say, from the abode of the *Manes*,⁸ or departed spirits, or (and this to my mind is more likely to be the true meaning of the word) because it is a word of good omen; for at Lanuvium the word *mane* means "good"—just as we too use its opposite *immane*

the woman passed into the man's *manus* [hand], and so passed from her own agnatic family to come under the *potestas* of the head of her husband's family. The Twelve Tables, however, enacted (Warmington, III, 462) that the absence by a wife from her husband's home for three consecutive nights in any one year (*trinoctii absentia*) broke the period of prescription and *manus* did not then arise. Gaius (I. 111) remarks that the law regarding *usus* and the *trinoctii absentia* had become obsolete by his time (i.e., in the time of Marcus Aurelius).

⁷ I.e., it is past midday in the world above.

⁸ Isidore of Seville 8. 100; 10. 139.

in the sense "not good," as, for example, in such expressions as *immanis belua* [a monstrous beast] or *immane facinus* [an abominable deed] and in all other like phrases.⁹

[14] Then comes the period "from morning to midday" (*meridiem*), that is to say to the middle of the day (*medium diei*); after midday comes the time called "the day's decline", and then "the end of the day," namely, the very last time of day [for legal business]—just as in the Twelve Tables we read: "Let sunset end proceedings."¹⁰ [15] "Evening" (*vespera*) follows, a word borrowed from the Greeks, who speak of ἑσπέρα, from Hesperus, the evening star; and it is for this reason too that Italy is called "Hesperia," because it lies toward the setting sun. Afterward come the divisions "first torchlight," "bedtime," and "the dead of night"—this last being the period unsuitable for the transaction of any business. These are the divisions of the civil day observed at Rome. [16] It follows therefore that the beginning of the Saturnalia (*Saturnaliorum*) will be midnight in the night which is about to come (*noctu futura*), although it is customary not to begin the festivities until tomorrow (*die crastini*).

⁹ Varro (*De lingua Latina* 6. 2. 4) refers to an adjective *mānus*, used in early Latin with the meaning "good"; and probably it is from this adjective that the name *Manes* was given, as a euphemism, to the spirits of the dead.

¹⁰ Warmington, III, 430.

CHAPTER 4

[1] Hereupon all praised Caecina Albinus for a memory which might well be likened to a storehouse of ancient lore. And then Praetextatus, seeing Avienus whispering to Furius Albinus, said: Come, Avienus, what have you been confiding to Albinus, as something which you would not wish the rest of us to hear?

[2] I am much impressed, replied Avienus, by the authority with which Caecina has spoken, and I am aware that such profound learning cannot be mistaken. Nevertheless, the expressions *noctu futura* and *die crastini* which he has used in preference to the regular forms *futura nocte* and *die crastino* struck my ear as strange.

[3] For *noctu* is not a noun but an adverb; and, moreover, *futura* as a declinable word cannot agree with an adverb: surely, too, *noctu* is related to *nocte* as *diu* is to *die*. Again *die* and *crastini* are not in the same case, and yet in such an expression only identity of case enables declinable words to be joined. And then I wish to know what is the difference between the forms *Saturnaliorum* and *Saturnalium* and why we should prefer to use the former.

[4] Caecina smiled but did not reply, and Symmachus then asked Servius for his opinion. In a company such as this, said Servius, a company of men whose learning no less than their noble birth commands respect, my place should be to learn rather than to teach. Nevertheless, I shall comply with your wishes, sir, and do as you bid, explaining first the declension of the word *Saturnalia* and afterwards the origins of those other expressions which are old-fashioned rather than new. [5] To say *Saturnalium* is to follow the rule: for declinable words with a dative plural ending in *-bus* never have more syllables in the genitive plural than in the dative, but the genitive has either the same number of syllables as the

dative (for example: *monilibus*, *monilium*; *sedilibus*, *sedilium*) or one syllable less (for example: *carminibus*, *carminum*; *liminibus*, *liminum*); and therefore, given *Saturnalibus*, *Saturnalium* rather than *Saturnaliorum* is the regular form of the genitive. [6] But those who say *Saturnaliorum* have the support of distinguished authorities; for Sallust, in the third book of his *Histories*, speaks of *Bacchanaliorum*; and Masurius in the second book of his *Calendar* says: "The day of the Wine Festival (*Vinaliorum*) is sacred to Jupiter and not, as some suppose, to Venus." [7] Moreover, to summon the grammarians as witnesses, Verrius Flaccus in his little book entitled *Saturn* says: "The days of the Saturnalia (*Saturnaliorum*) are regarded as festivals by the Greeks also"; and again, in the same work: "I think that I have written a clear account of the arrangement of the Saturnalia (*Saturnaliorum*)." So, too, Julius Modestus in his treatise *On Rest Days* speaks of "the rest days of the Saturnalia (*Saturnaliorum*)," and in the same book says: "Antias relates that Numa Pompilius was the founder of the Agonalia (*Agonaliorum*)."

[8] But you will say that the question is whether there are any grounds to support the usage of these authorities. To be sure, there are; and, since it is not unfitting that a grammarian should be confronted with points of grammatical analogy, which are after all his business, I shall try to discover, by inference, what it is that has led these men to turn aside from the regular form of the word and to say *Saturnaliorum* rather than *Saturnalium*.

[9] In the first place, then, I think that they wished to mark the difference between these names, which are names of festivals and are neuter in gender and have no singular number, and names which are declined in the singular as well as in the plural; for such words as *Compitalia*, *Bacchanalia*, *Agonalia*, *Vinalia*, and the others like them are names of festivals and are not used in the singular; or, if you do use the singular form, it will have a different meaning unless you add "*festum*," and say *Bacchanale festum*, *Agonale festum*, and so on—the word *Bacchanale* or *Agonale* being now not a substantive but an adjective, or what is called in Greek an "epithet."

[10] They were minded, therefore, to use a distinctive form for the genitive in order to show by this method of declension that the word was the name of a festival. And they knew also that not

infrequently some declinable words with a dative plural ending in *-bus* have a genitive plural in *-rum* (for example: *domibus*, *domorum*; *duobus*, *duorum*; *ambobus*, *amborum*). [11] So too with the word *viridia*: when it is used as an epithet, the genitive ends in *-um* (thus *viridia prata* has *viridium pratorum*); but when we wish to indicate the essential greenness of a place we say *viridiorum*, as for example in the phrase "the beautiful appearance of the verdure (*viridiorum*)," for *viridia* is then used as a substantive and not as an adjective.

[12] However, such was the freedom with which the old writers used the genitive in *-rum* that Asinius Pollio frequently employs the form *vectigaliorum*, although the singular *vectigal* is found no less often than the plural *vectigalia*; and although we read: "And in his left hand held the sacred shield (*ancile*),"¹ we nevertheless come across the form *anciliorum* for the genitive plural. [13] We must therefore ask ourselves if it is absolutely true to say that this form of the genitive is confined to names of festivals or if the truth is rather that the old writers took pleasure in variety. For you see that we find other words than those which stand for the names of festivals declined in this way, as is clear from the reference that I have made to the existence of such forms as *viridiorum*, *vectigaliorum*, and *anciliorum*. [14] What is more, I find even the names of festivals declined according to rule in old writers; for Varro says that the day of the Feralia (*Feralium*) takes its name from the practice of carrying (*ferendis*) dishes of food to the tombs—he did not say *Feraliorum*—and elsewhere he uses the form *Floralium*, not *Floraliorum*, in a passage referring not to the Floral Games (*Ludi Florales*) but to the festival of the *Floralia* itself. [15] Masurius, too, in the second Book of his *Calendar* says: "The day of the festival of Liber (*Liberalium*) is called by the pontiffs the day of the "Sacrifice in Honor of Mars"; and again, in the same book, he says: "That night and the day which immediately follows it, which is the day of the Festival of the Groves," using the form *Lucarium*, not *Lucariorum* (just as many authors have said *Liberalium*, not *Liberaliorum*).

[16] We must conclude, therefore, that the old writers allowed

¹ Vergil, *Aeneid*. 7. 188.

themselves freedom to vary inflections and would say, for example, both *exanimos* and *exanimēs*, *inermos* and *inermēs*, *hilaros* and *hilarēs*; so that it is certainly permissible to say both *Saturnaliūm* and *Saturnaliorūm*, the former having the support of the grammatical rule as well as of precedent, the latter relying on precedent alone—although the precedents are many.

[17] As for the rest of the words which struck our friend Avienus as strange, we have the evidence of old writers to defend their use. Ennius—unless someone thinks that the more polished elegance of our age requires one to reject him—has combined the words *noctu* and *concubia* in the following lines:

And on that night, at the time of sleep (*qua . . . noctu . . . concubia*), the Gauls by stealth attacked the citadel's topmost walls, surprised the sentries, and cut them down.²

[18] And in this passage it should be observed that the poet has not only said *noctu concubia*, but he has used the expression *qua noctu* as well. This was in the seventh Book of the *Annals*; in the third Book the same usage appeared more clearly still, in the line:

This night (*hac noctu*) the fate of all Etruria will hang by a thread.³

Claudius Quadrigarius, too, in the third Book of his *Annals* writes: "The Senate, however, met by night (*de nocte*), but it was late at night (*noctu multa*) that they broke up and went home." [19] Nor is it irrelevant, I think, at this point to remind you also that in the Twelve Tables the decemvirs, clean contrary to the accepted usage, said *nox* for *noctu*. The words are as follows: If a theft shall have been committed at night (*nox*), and one shall have killed him (*im*) [the thief], let him be held to have been lawfully killed.⁴ And here it should be noted further that the word used for "him"—for the accusative case of *is*—is not *eum* but *im*.

[20] Again, our learned friend has the authority of the old writers to support his use of the expression *diecrastini*; for it was their custom to say sometimes *diequinti* and sometimes *diequinte*, joining the words together to serve as an adverb,⁵ as is clear from

² Warmington, I, 92.

³ Warmington, I, 56.

⁴ Warmington, III, 482.

⁵ Aulus Gellius 10. 24.

the fact that the second syllable of the double word is short, although the "e" of *die* is long by nature when the word stands alone. [21] I have said that the last syllable of this adverbial expression was sometimes written -e and sometimes -i, for it was generally the custom of the old writers to end with either letter indifferently, writing, for example, *praefiscine* and *praefiscini*, or *proclive* and *proclivi*. [22] And here I am reminded of that line of Pomponius, in the Atellan farce entitled *Maevia*, which runs:

For three days now I have eaten nothing: on the fourth day
(*diequarte*) I shall die of hunger. [Ribbeck, II, 284]

[23] In the same way *diepristine* was used with the meaning *die pristino* [on the day before], although we now transpose the component parts and use the word *pridie*, as though to say *pristino die*.

[24] I do not deny that we find *die quarto* in our reading of the old authors, but this expression is used with reference to something which has happened in the past and not to something in the future; for that most learned man, Gnaeus Matius, in his *Mimiambi*, instead of saying as we do *nudius quartus* for "four days ago," says *die quarto* in the lines:

It was lately, four days ago, as I recall, and he certainly broke
the only pitcher in the house. [Baehrens, p. 282]

The distinction then will be this: that we say *die quarto* when we are referring to the past, but *diequarte* with reference to the future.

[25] However, I would not have you think that I have overlooked the expression *diecrastini*, and here is an example of such usage from the second Book of the *Histories* of Caelius: "If I might have the cavalry now and you are prepared to follow me with the rest of the army, on the fifth day (*diequinti*), I shall have dinner ready for you on the Capitol at Rome."

[26] Your Caelius, remarked Symmachus, took both the story and the expression *diequinti* from the *Origins* of Marcus Cato, who wrote: "And so the commander of the cavalry gave the Carthaginian general this advice: 'Send the cavalry with me to Rome and on the fifth day (*diequinti*) dinner shall be ready for you on the Capitol.'⁶ [27] And I think, added Praetextatus, some further proof of the old usage is to be found in the words with which the praetor,

⁶ The reference is to the advice given to Hannibal by Maharbal, to march on Rome after the battle of Cannae (Livy 22. 51).

in accordance with the custom of our ancestors, regularly proclaims the rest day called the Compitalia. The words are these: "On the ninth day (*dienoni*) the Roman People, the Quirites, will celebrate the Compitalia."

CHAPTER 5

[1] Curius, Fabricius, and Coruncanius of old, said Avienus, looking at Servius, and that famous triple band of brothers, too, the Horatii, who belong to a still earlier age, talked clearly and intelligibly with their fellows, using the language of their own day and not that of the Aurunci or Sicani or Pelasgi, who men say were the first inhabitants of Italy. But you, Servius, might as well be conversing now with Evander's mother, in seeking to recall for our use words which became obsolete many generations ago; and, what is more, you have summoned in support of this medley of expressions a number of distinguished persons whose memories were stocked with the fruits of their constant reading. [2] You, my friends, all proclaim that you find pleasure in antiquity because of the honesty, sobriety, and moderation of those times. Very well then; let us show in our lives the manners of the past but speak in the language of our own day. For I always remember and take to heart what Gaius Caesar, that man of outstanding genius and wisdom, wrote in the first Book of his treatise *On Grammatical Analogy*: "I should avoid," he said, "a rare and unusual word as I would a rock."¹ [3] After all, continued Avienus, there is a thousand of such words (*mille verborum talium est*) which, although they were used frequently, on good authority, long ago, have by later ages been, as it were, discharged from service and discarded.² I could give plenty of instances of these words now, were not the approach

¹ Aulus Gellius 1. 10; John of Salisbury 8. 10 (748c).

² For examples of such use by Macrobius of the genitive case after *mille*, see below: 5. 14. 7 (*mille talium vocabulorum*) and 5. 16. 7 (*mille sententiarum talium*).

of night a warning that we must presently be going our several ways.

[4] Hush, pray, said Praetextatus with characteristic earnestness, let us not so far forget ourselves as to do harm to the respect that is due to antiquity, the mother of the arts. Indeed you go far to betray your love for what is old in your attempt to dissemble that love, for your expression "There is a thousand of words" has an odor of antiquity about it. [5] It is true that Cicero in his speech on behalf of Milo³ has left us this passage: "Before Clodius's estate, that estate on which, thanks to those extravagant basements, fully a thousand of able-bodied men was employed"—not "were employed," the usual reading in the inferior manuscripts—and in his sixth Philippic⁴ he says: "Who was ever found in that Janus⁵ who would credit Lucius Antonius with a thousand of sesterces?" And it is true that Varro too, a contemporary of Cicero, in the seventeenth Book of his *Human Antiquities* has written: "It is more than a thousand and one hundred of years." Nevertheless in using this construction Cicero and Varro have only relied on the authority of their predecessors, [6] for Quadrigarius in the third Book of his *Annals* wrote: "There a thousand of men is killed," and Lucilius in the third Book of his *Satires* has the line:

From gate to harbor is a thousand [of paces], six thence to Salernum.⁶

[7] Indeed, in another passage Lucilius has even declined *mille*, for in the fifteenth Book he says:

No jolting Campanian steed, although it has beaten this horse in a run of a thousand of paces, or two thousand (*milli passum atque duobus*), will keep up with him over a longer distance but will look as if he were going the other way⁷

and likewise in the ninth Book he says:

³ *Pro Milone* 20. 53. See also Aulus Gellius 1. 16.

⁴ 6. 5. 15.

⁵ Cicero is referring to the *medius* [middle] *lanus* as the place, in or near the Forum, where banking and moneylending business was carried on at Rome. References are found, e.g., in Cicero, Horace, and Livy, to three *lani* (*summus*, *medius*, and *imus*). These are generally held to have been square archways, or "thoroughfares" (*transitiones perviae*), with rooms above, but they may have been three parts of a continuous arcade.

⁶ Warmington, III, 38. ⁷ Warmington, III, 162.

You with but one thousand of sesterces (*milli nummum*) can gain a hundred [thousand].⁸

[8] In saying *milli passum* for *mille passibus* and *milli nummum* for *mille nummis* Lucilius has shown clearly that *mille* is a noun, is used in the singular number, has an ablative case, and that its plural is *milia*. [9] For *mille* does not stand for the Greek χίλια but for χιλιάς, and just as one can say one χιλιάς and two χιλιάδες, so the old writers, following a definite and regular principle, used to say *unum mille* and *duo milia*.⁹

[10] But tell me, Avienus, continued Praetextatus, when it comes to voting on the use of words, would you disfranchise those learned men whom Cicero and Varro were proud to imitate, and would you thrust them from the bridge¹⁰ as though they were old men in their sixties?

[11] Well, he added, we might go on to say more about this, did not the lateness of the hour require us to part—although I am as sorry to see you go as you are to go. But what are your wishes for tomorrow? Most people spend the day in games of backgammon and draughts. I suggest, however, that we spend it from early morning until dinnertime in such sober conversation as that in which we have been engaged. And at dinner, too, instead of indulging in heavy drinking and lavish dishes, I suggest that we pass the time decently in learned inquiries and in exchange of information from our place at table.¹¹ [12] If we do so, we shall find the rest days more productive of good than all our workaday business; for we shall not, as the saying goes, just be allowing our minds to unbend—Musonius, you know, says loosening (*remittere*) your mind is like losing (*amittere*) it—but the charm of pleasant and improving talk will afford our minds a measure of soothing relaxa-

⁸ Warmington, III, 112.

⁹ Aulus Gellius 1. 16. 8.

¹⁰ The "bridges" (*pontes*) were the narrow gangways leading from the enclosures in which the tribes or centuries assembled to vote up to the tribunal of the presiding magistrate (cf. Cicero *De legibus* 3. 17. 38). There was, however, a popular belief that, of old, men over sixty years of age used to be thrown from a bridge into the Tiber and drowned, whence the proverb *sexagenarios de ponte* and the application of the term *depontani* to men in their sixties.

¹¹ Or: "in exchanging accounts of what we have read (*ex lecto*)."

tion.¹² If such is your pleasure, you will win the warmest approval of my household gods by meeting here.

[13] No one, replied Symmachus, at any rate no one who regards himself as a not unworthy member of this company, will refuse to accept the proposed meeting or its president. But, to complete the party, I move that we invite these others to join us and dine with us: Flavianus, who has proved that he has surpassed that admirable man Venustus, his father, by the distinction of his character and the dignity of his life no less than by the abundance and depth of his learning; and with him Postumianus, who adds to the renown of the bar by the high reputation of his pleading, and Eustathius, a man so proficient in every branch of philosophy as by himself to take for us the place of those three gifted philosophers who were the boast of our predecessors. [14] And here I refer, of course, to those famous men whom the Athenians once sent as envoys to the Senate, to seek the remission of a fine of some five hundred talents which had been imposed on their city for the sack of Oropus.¹³ [15] They were the philosophers Carneades of the Academy, Diogenes the Stoic, and Critolaus the Peripatetic, each of whom, we are told, lectured separately before a large crowd in the most frequented parts of Rome to display his ability. [16] The eloquence of Carneades is said to have been forcible and vehement, that of Critolaus adroit and well-turned, that of Diogenes restrained and sober; nevertheless, when they appeared before the Senate, they engaged the senator Caelius¹⁴ to act as an interpreter. But our friend Eustathius, who has studied the doctrines of every school—choosing to follow those that are most susceptible of proof—and combines in himself all the styles of speech that those Greeks displayed, is so competent to act among us as his own interpreter that it would be impossible to say in which tongue he would discourse with the greater ease and elegance—in Greek or in Latin.

[17] The proposal made by Quintus Aurelius, to invite the companions suggested, met with general approval; and, this decision reached, the guests, all taking leave of Praetextatus first and then of each other, returned to their several homes.

¹² Aulus Gellius 18. 2. 1.

¹³ Aulus Gellius 6. 14. See also Nettleship, *Lectures and Essays*, p. 50.

¹⁴ G. Acilius? See Aulus Gellius 6. 14.

CHAPTER 6

[1] On the next day, as they had agreed the day before, all came early in the morning to the house of Vettius Praetextatus, who was waiting for them in the library. [2] This, said he as he received them, I see will be a famous day for me; for you are here, and those whom we decided to ask to be of our company have also promised to come—all except Postumianus, who felt that he ought rather to be getting up his briefs. But when he declined the invitation, I asked the rhetorician Eusebius in his place, a shining example of the learning and eloquence of Greece. And I have suggested to all that they should give us the pleasure of their company from daybreak; since no public business would properly be carried on today, a day on which you certainly will not see anybody wearing formal dress, whether civil dress or military (*togatus*,¹ *trabeatus*, *paludatus*, *praetextatus*).

[3] You refer, Praetextatus, to the words used to describe different kinds of dress, said Avienus, interrupting, as was his way, and you mention a name which Rome and I revere—your own. It occurs to me therefore to ask a question which will not, I think, seem absurd; for, since neither the *toga* nor the *trabea* nor the *paludamentum* has given rise to the formation of a proper name, why, pray, has the usage of old times led to such occurrence only in the case of the *praetexta*; or else what is the origin of your name?

[4] While Avienus was speaking, in came Flavianus and Eustathius, a pair well known for their friendship, and shortly afterward Eusebius. Their arrival added to the life of the gathering, and after an exchange of greetings they sat down, asking, as they did so, what the discussion on which they had chanced was about. [5] You have come in the nick of time, said Vettius, for I was looking for some-

¹ Cf. Martial 6. 24.

one to take my part. Our friend Avienus is raising the question of my name and is demanding to know its origin—for all the world as if proof of parentage were required of it. No one bears the name “Togatus” or “Trabeatus” or “Paludatus,” and so he asks us for an explanation why “Praetextatus” is used as a proper name. [6] The temple door at Delphi bore the inscription “Know Thyself,” and this is also a maxim of one of the Seven Sages. What an ignoramus then I must be thought to be, if I am ignorant of my own name! And so I must now tell of its origin and how I come to bear it.

[7] Tullus Hostilius, the third king of the Romans, was the first to introduce the use at Rome of the curule chair, lictors, and the *toga picta*,² and *toga praetexta*: it was after his conquest of the Etruscans, for whose magistrates they were the insignia of office. At that time children used not to wear the *praetexta*³ because, as the other attributes which I have mentioned, the dress marked the holding of a public office. [8] Afterward, however, Tarquinius Priscus (son of the Corinthian exile, Demaratus) who, some say, was called Lucumo—he was third⁴ after Hostilius and the fifth⁴ after Romulus to reign at Rome—celebrated a triumph over the Sabines; and, since in that war his son, a lad of fourteen years, had killed one of the enemy with his own hand, he made a public speech in the boy’s honor and presented him with an amulet (*bullā*) of gold and a purple-bordered *toga praetexta*, to show by rewards indicative of manliness and office that the lad had displayed a courage beyond his years. [9] For just as the *toga praetexta* was worn by a magistrate, so it was the custom for a victorious general to wear on his breast at his triumph an amulet containing charms believed to be of the greatest potency against the evil eye. [10] This then is the origin of the custom by which boys of noble birth came to wear the *praetexta* and the *bullā* as a presage of, and a prayer for, manliness like that of him who first received these rewards while yet a boy.

[11] According to other authorities, when that same Priscus with the shrewdness of a farseeing ruler was organizing the citizens in

² Originally the garb of royalty, later the embroidered toga worn by a victorious commander at his triumph (purple, embroidered with gold and interwoven with golden stars; see Appian *Romana Historia* 8.66; Suetonius *Nero* 25).

³ Girls as well as boys wore the *praetexta* in childhood. See Propertius 4.11.33. See also Fowler, *Essays*, p. 42.

⁴ Reckoned inclusively.

classes, he considered that the dress of the free-born boys was also a matter of first importance. And he therefore ordained that boys of patrician birth should wear a golden *bullā* with a purple-bordered *toga*, provided that their fathers had held a curule office, [12] the rest of these boys being allowed the use of the *praetexta* only, such use being subject to a provision that their fathers had served in the cavalry as prescribed by law. Sons of freedmen, however, had no right to the *praetexta*; still less had resident aliens, since these last had no relationship with the citizens of Rome. [13] But afterward the right to wear the *praetexta* was granted to the sons of freedmen also, for the following reason which Marcus Laelius, the augur, relates. He says that during the second Punic War, in consequence of a number of portents, the duumvirs [*recte* decemvirs],⁵ pursuant to a decree of the Senate, consulted the Sibylline Books and, after inspection of the books, proclaimed a day of public prayer to be held on the Capitol and the provision of a feast for the gods from the proceeds of a collection of alms to which freedwomen with the right to wear the long robe⁶ were also permitted to contribute. [14] Prayers were offered by boys, both free-born and sons of freedmen, and a hymn was sung by maidens who had both parents living. Subsequently, sons of freedmen, too, provided that they had been born of lawfully wedded mothers, were allowed to wear the *toga praetexta*, but in place of the honor of a golden amulet they wore a *bullā* of leather round their necks.

[15] Verrius Flaccus tells of a reply received from an oracle to the effect that a plague raging at Rome was due to the fact that men were "looking down on the gods."⁷ The reply caused dismay in the city, for it was not understood. But on the day of the Games in the Circus a boy happened to be looking down on the procession from an upper room and told his father the order in which he had seen the sacred and secret objects arranged in the coffer on the car. The father reported the incident to the Senate, and they resolved that the route along which the procession passed should be screened. So the plague ceased; and the boy who had solved the riddle of the oracle received the right to wear the *toga praetexta* as a reward.

⁵ See 1. 17. 29, below. Cf. Livy 22. 1 and 27. 37. See also Fraenkel, *Horace*, 380n.

⁶ The "long robe" was a mark of a woman of good character; cf. Horace *Satires* 1. 2. 29.

⁷ Cf. Aristophanes *Nubes* 226.

[16] Learned antiquaries relate that at the time of the rape of the Sabine women, one (named Hersilia) was carried off clinging to her daughter and was given by Romulus to be the wife of a certain Hostus, a man of outstanding valor who had come from Latium to the place of refuge set up by Romulus at Rome. She was the first of the Sabine women to give birth to a child, a son, to whom, as the first to be born in a foreign land (*in hostico*), she gave the name of Hostus Hostilius. Romulus, too, honored the boy with a golden *bullā* and the distinction of the *praetexta*; for the story goes that, when Romulus called the Sabine women together to console them for their capture, he promised to confer a signal honor on the child whose mother was the first to bear a citizen of his city of Rome.

[17] Some believe that free-born boys were allowed to wear the heart-shaped figure of the *bullā* on the breast, in order that the sight of this figure might remind them that excellence of heart was needed to make them men; and that the further gift of the *toga praetexta* was made to the end that the blush of the purple might teach them to order their lives with a modesty befitting their free birth.

[18] I have spoken of the origin of the *praetexta*, and I have also given the reasons for supposing that it was granted as a badge of childhood. I must now briefly explain how it came about that the name for this kind of dress passed into use as a proper name.⁸ [19] It was formerly the custom for Senators, when they went to the House, to be accompanied by sons who were still wearing the *praetexta*. One day, when the discussion of a matter of considerable importance had been adjourned to the morrow, it was resolved that no one should refer to the subject of the debate until a decision had been reached. [20] The mother of a young Papirius, who had been with his father in the Senate, asked her son what business had come before the House, but the boy replied that the business was secret and might not be mentioned. This made the woman all the more eager to hear about it, for the secrecy of the matter and the boy's silence provoked her curiosity, and she therefore questioned him more closely and more urgently. [21] Then, because of his mother's insistence, the boy had recourse to a neat and humorous falsehood: the question debated was, he said, whether the advantage

⁸ Aulus Gellius 1. 23.

and interest of the state would be better served by one man having two wives or one woman two husbands. [22] On hearing this, the woman was filled with alarm and hurriedly left the house to carry the news to the other wives. Next day the matrons of Rome flocked in great crowds to the Senate, begging with tears and entreaties that one woman should be married to two men rather than two women to one man. [23] The Senators, as they entered the House, were amazed at the unrestrained behavior of the women and were at a loss to know the meaning of their demand, for such a mad and unseemly departure from the natural modesty of the sex seemed to presage some disaster, and they were disquieted. [24] But the general dismay was relieved when the young Papirius stepped forward and told the House all that had happened—what his mother had insisted on hearing and his own fictitious reply. [25] The Senate warmly commended the lad's loyalty and ingenuity but resolved that in the future boys should not be admitted to the House with their fathers, an exception being made in favor of the young Papirius alone, who was honored subsequently by decree with the surname "*Praetextatus*," for the discretion he had shown, in silence and in speech, while still of age to wear the *praetexta*. [26] This surname afterwards remained in our family as the family name.

The Scipios, continued Vettius, got their name just because a Cornelius was given the surname "Scipio" [a staff] for acting as a staff to guide his blind father (another Cornelius), and from him this name passed as a surname to his descendants. So too with your friend Messala, Avienus: he derives his name from the surname which Valerius Maximus received after his capture of the famous city of Messana in Sicily. [27] And there is nothing surprising in the fact that surnames become family names, since the opposite also happens and surnames have been formed from family names—Aemilianus, for example, from Aemilius and Servilianus from Servilius.

[28] Messala and Scipio, interposed Eusebius, received their surnames, as you say, the former for valor and the latter for filial piety, but what of Scrophia and Asina? Tell us, please, the origin of these surnames, for they belong to men of no ordinary worth; and yet the names would seem to suggest an insult rather than a compliment.

[29] These names, replied Praetextatus, are neither complimentary nor insulting in their origin; they are the result of chance circumstances. The Cornelii were given the surname "Asina" because a head of the Cornelian clan—buying some land or marrying a daughter—being required to produce the usual guarantors, brought a she-ass (*asina*) with a load of money to the Forum as a tangible security in their place. [30] As for Tremellius, he got the surname "Scrophia" from the following incident. He was at his country estate with his children and household when his slaves stole and killed a sow (*scrophia*) which was wandering away from a neighbor's land. The neighbor summoned guards and surrounded the other's whole estate, to prevent any possible removal of the animal, and then called on the master to return it to him. But Tremellius had heard from his bailiff what had happened, and so he put the dead body of the sow under some rugs on which his wife was lying and invited the neighbor to make a search. When they came to the bedroom, Tremellius swore that there was no sow in his house, "Except," said he, pointing to the bed, "the one lying in those rugs." And for this humorous oath he was given the surname Scrophia.

CHAPTER 7

[1] While Praetextatus was recounting these anecdotes, one of the slaves, whose duty it was to admit callers, announced that Evangelus was at the door and with him Disarius, who at that time was regarded as the most distinguished of the medical profession at Rome. [2] Frowns on the faces of most of those present made it clear that they found the appearance of Evangelus disturbing and unpleasant, according ill with a quiet gathering; for he was an impudent fellow with a bitter wit and a shamelessly mordant tongue, who cared nothing for the dislike which his provocative language, directed against friend and foe alike, used to stir up against him everywhere. Praetextatus, however, with the unruffled kindliness which he showed to all alike, gave orders to admit the visitors and sent to meet them. [3] Horus too, who had been just behind, came in with them, a man whose mind matched his body in strength, for after countless victories as a boxer he had taken up the study of philosophy and, as a follower of Antisthenes, Crates, and Diogenes himself, was of no little repute among the Cynics.

[4] Finding himself in the presence of a large and distinguished company who rose as he entered, Evangelus said: Is it just chance that has brought all these gentlemen to your house, Praetextatus, or have you met deliberately to consider some matter of importance which called for the absence of witnesses? If that is so—and I think it is—I shall go away rather than meddle with your secrets; for I shall be glad to keep clear of them, although, as ill luck will have it, I have blundered upon them.

[5] Vettius, who for all his unfailing forbearance, serenity, and strength of character was somewhat put out by this impudent question, replied: [6] If you had given a thought to the conspicuous integrity of these men, or to me, you would not suppose that we

were sharing any secret which could not be disclosed to you or, for that matter, to all the world. For I have not forgotten—and I am sure that all here know well—that hallowed precept of philosophy: “Speak with your fellow men as though in the hearing of the gods and with the gods as though in the hearing of your fellow men.”¹ The second half of this precept forbids us to ask anything of the gods, if it were unbecoming to admit to our fellows the wish to have it. [7] But as a matter of fact we have met in honor of the sacred rest days, and it is our intention to avoid idleness and to put the leisure afforded by them to good use by spending the whole day in learned conversation, to which each of us is to contribute his share. [8] For if, during the celebration of a sacred festival, no religious ordinance forbids us to scour a watercourse, and if the laws of gods and men allow us to dip our sheep then to keep them healthy,² surely we may be held to show respect for religion if we devote to the hallowed study of literature days that are appointed to be kept holy. [9] But since, by the grace of some god, you and your companions, Evangelus, have also come to be of our company, let us prevail upon you all, if it is your pleasure, to pass the day with us and share our talk and our table. In making this request I feel sure that I have the concurrence of all present here today.

[10] To be sure, replied Evangelus, it is not considered bad form to turn up uninvited at a discussion, but to gate-crash a dinner party prepared for others³ is mentioned with disapproval by Homer,⁴ although the offender then was a brother, and, if a great king received only one Menelaus, beware lest it be thought unduly presumptuous on your part to have three.

[11] Then all supported Praetextatus and begged and in a friendly manner invited the new arrivals to join them, addressing themselves most often and most pressingly to Evangelus, but without overlooking those who had come in with him.

[12] I take it, said Evangelus, mollified by the unanimity of the request, I take it that you are all acquainted with the book by Varro—one of his Menippean satires—called *You Never Can Tell*

¹ Cf. Seneca *Epistulae* 10. 5.

² Cf. 1. 16. 12 and 3. 3. 10-12.

³ John of Salisbury 8. 7 (731d).

⁴ *Iliad* 2. 408; cf. Plato *Symposium* 174c.

What the Evening Has in Store for You? In it he lays down the rule that the number of diners should not be less than the number of the Graces nor more than the number of the Muses.⁵ But here, not counting the master of the feast, I see that there are as many of you as there are Muses.⁶ So why seek to add to a perfect number?

[13] Your presence will confer this benefit on us, replied Vettius, that our full member will then equal that of the Muses and the Graces together; and it is meet that the Graces attend a feast in honor of the chief of all the gods.

When all were seated, Horus turning to Avienus, with whom he was on the most friendly terms, said: [14] In this worship of Saturn, whom you call the chief of the gods, your ceremonies differ from those of that most devout of people, the Egyptians; for they had admitted neither Saturn nor Serapis himself to the secret places of their temples until after the death of Alexander of Macedon, when pressure by their despotic rulers the Ptolemies compelled them to accept the cult of these gods, after the manner of the inhabitants of Alexandria, who used to hold them in special reverence. [15] Nevertheless, in obeying the royal command, the Egyptians were careful not altogether to violate their religious observances; for the law of their religion required them to propitiate the gods with prayers and incense only, never with the blood of beasts, whereas it was the custom to sacrifice victims to these two newcomers. They therefore placed the temples of Saturn and Serapis outside a city's boundary, in order that they might worship them with the blood of the appointed sacrifice without defiling the city's temples by the killing of beasts. That is why no town in Egypt has admitted a shrine of either of these two gods within its walls. [16] And I hear that you have accepted one of them with reservation and indeed with reluctance, although you worship the other, Saturn, with greater honors than are paid to any of the rest of the gods. If, then, there is nothing to prevent my knowing it, please let me hear why this is so.

[17] All here are equally competent and learned, Avienus replied and added (with intent to leave it to Praetextatus to answer the question asked): but Vettius has special knowledge of everything

⁵ Aulus Gellius 13. 11; John of Salisbury 8. 10 (748c).

⁶ The nine present include Praetextatus.

that relates to religious ceremonies and he can tell you the origin of the reverence paid to Saturn and reveal the reason for the customary festival.

Praetextatus at first tried to refer the question to the others but yielded to a general demand that he should deal with it himself, [18] and, as silence fell, he began as follows: The laws of religion, he said, allow me to disclose the origin of the festival of the Saturnalia so far as the account of its origin is a matter of mythology or is made known to all by the physicists. But of the secret nature of the deity I may not treat, for it is not permissible even at the sacred rites themselves to tell of the hidden principles which flow from the fountain of pure truth, and whoever attains to knowledge of them is bidden to keep such knowledge locked in his breast. Our friend Horus, then, may join with me in a survey of the origin of all that may properly be made known.

[19] According to Hyginus, who has followed Protarchus of Tralles, Janus ruled over the country now called Italy, and he and Cameses, who was also a native of it, held the land in joint sovereignty, the country being called Camesene and the town Janiculum.

[20] Later the kingdom passed to Janus alone.

Janus is believed to have had two faces and so could see before him and behind his back—a reference, no doubt, to the foresight and shrewdness of the king, as one who not only knew the past but would also foresee the future, just as Antevorta and Postvorta are worshipped at Rome as deities most fittingly associated with divination.⁷

[21] When Saturn arrived by ship, Janus received him here as his guest and learned from him the art of husbandry, thereby improving a mode of life which, before men understood how to make use of the fruits of the earth, had been brutish and rude; and he rewarded Saturn by sharing his kingdom with him. [22] Janus was also the first to strike coins of bronze, and in this too he showed his high regard for Saturn; for on one side of a coin he stamped the image of his own head but on the other side a ship, that posterity might preserve the remembrance of Saturn, whose coming had

⁷ On the functions and nature of Janus see the review by E. Gierstad of L. A. Holland's *Janus and the Bridge* in *Journal of Roman Studies*, LIII (1963), 229.

been by ship. And that the bronze coinage was so marked is evident even today from the game of chance in which boys throw pennies in the air, calling "heads" or "ships," for the game bears witness to the old usage.

[23] Janus and Saturn reigned together in harmony and built two neighboring towns by their joint endeavors, as is clear not only from the line in Vergil which runs:

This fortress town the name Janiculum, that Saturnia, bore

[*Aeneid* 8. 358]

but also from the fact that later generations dedicated two successive months to these personages, December having in it the festival of Saturn and January embodying the name of Janus.

[24] It was during their reign that Saturn suddenly disappeared, and Janus then devised means to add to his honors. First he gave the name Saturnia to all the land which acknowledged his rule; and then he built an altar, instituting rites as to a god and calling these rites the Saturnalia—a fact which goes to show how very much older the festival is than the city of Rome. And it was because Saturn had improved the conditions of life that, by order of Janus, religious honors were paid to him, as his effigy indicates, which received the additional attribute of a sickle, the symbol of harvest.

[25] Saturn is credited with the invention of the art of grafting, with the cultivation of fruit trees, and with instructing men in everything that belongs to the fertilizing of the fields. Furthermore, at Cyrene his worshipers, when they offer sacrifice to him, crown themselves with fresh figs and present each other with cakes, for they hold that he discovered honey and fruits. Moreover, at Rome men call him "Sterculius," as having been the first to fertilize the fields with dung (*stercus*). [26] His reign is said to have been a time of great happiness, both on account of the universal plenty that then prevailed and because as yet there was no division into bond and free—as one may gather from the complete license enjoyed by slaves at the Saturnalia.

[27] Another tradition accounts for the Saturnalia as follows. Hercules is said to have left men behind him in Italy, either (as certain authorities hold) because he was angry with them for neglecting to watch over his herds or (as some suppose), deliberately, to protect his altar and temple from attacks. Harassed by brigands, these men occupied a high hill and called themselves

Saturnians, from the name which the hill too used previously to bear, and, conscious of the protection afforded to them by the name of Saturn and by the awe which the god inspired, they are said to have instituted the Saturnalia, to the end that the very observance of the festival thus proclaimed might bring the uncouth minds of their neighbors to show a greater respect for the worship of the god.

[28] I am aware too of the account given by Varro of the origin of the Saturnalia. The Pelasgians, he says, when they were driven from their homes, made for various lands, but most of them flocked to Dodona and, doubtful where to settle, consulted the oracle. They received this reply: "Go ye in search of the land of the Sicels and the Aborigines, a land, sacred to Saturn, even Cotyle, where floateth an island. Mingle with these people and then send a tenth to Phoebus and offer heads to Hades and a man to the Father."⁸ Such was the response which they received, and after many wanderings they came to Latium, where in the lake of Cutilia they found a floating⁹ island, [29] for there was a large expanse of turf—perhaps solidified mud or perhaps an accumulation of marsh land with brushwood and trees forming a luxuriant wood—and it was drifting through the water by the movement of the waves in such a way as to win credence even for the tale of Delos, the island which, for all its lofty hills and wide plains, used to journey through the seas from place to place. [30] The discovery of this marvel showed the Pelasgians that here was the home foretold for them. And, after having driven out the Sicilian inhabitants, they took possession of the land, dedicating a tenth of the spoil to Apollo, in accordance with the response given by the oracle, and raising a little shrine to Dis and an altar to Saturn, whose festival they named the Saturnalia.

[31] For many years they thought to propitiate Dis with human heads and Saturn with the sacrifice of men, since the oracle had bidden them: "Offer heads to Hades and a man (φῶτα) to the Father." But later, the story goes, Hercules, returning through Italy with the herds of Geryon, persuaded their descendants to replace these unholy sacrifices with others of good omen, by offering to Dis little masks cleverly fashioned to represent the human face, instead of human heads, and by honoring the altars of

⁸ Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Antiquitates Romanae* 1. 15 and 19; Pliny *Epistulae* 8. 20.

⁹ Reading *enantem*.

Saturn with lighted candles instead of with the blood of a man; for the word φῶτα means "lights" as well as "a man." [32] This is the origin of the custom of sending round wax tapers during the Saturnalia, although others think that the practice is derived simply from the fact that it was in the reign of Saturn that we made our way, as though to the light, from a rude and gloomy existence to a knowledge of the liberal arts. [33] I should add, however, that I have found it written that, since many through greed made the Saturnalia an excuse to solicit and demand gifts from their clients, a practice which bore heavily on those of more slender means, one Publicius, a tribune, proposed to the people that no one should send anything but wax tapers to one richer than himself.

[34] I find, Praetextatus, interposed Albinus Caecina, a substituted sacrifice, such as that which you have just mentioned, made in later times at the rites of the Compitalia, when games used to be held at crossroads throughout the city, that is to say, on the restoration of these games by Tarquinius Superbus, in honor of the Lares and of Mania, in accordance with an oracle of Apollo. For that oracle ordained that offering should be made "for heads with heads," [35] and for some time the ritual required the sacrifice of boys to the goddess Mania, the mother of the Lares, to insure the safety of the family. But after the expulsion of Tarquinius, Junius Brutus, as consul, determined to change the nature of the sacrificial rite. By his order heads of garlic and poppies were used at the rite, so that the oracle was obeyed, in so far as it had prescribed "heads," and a criminal and unholy sacrifice was discarded.¹⁰ It also became the practice to avert any peril that threatened a particular family by hanging up woolen¹¹ images before the door of the house. As for the games themselves, they were customarily called "Compitalia" from the crossroads (*compita*) at which they were held. But I interrupted you. Pray go on.

[36] You have referred, said Praetextatus, to a parallel instance of a change for the better in the ritual of a sacrifice. The point is well taken and well timed. But from the reasons adduced touching

¹⁰ Cf. the story told by Ovid (*Fasti* 3. 339), how Numa cheated Jupiter of a human sacrifice. See also Plutarch *Numa* 15. So too Vulcan accepted an offering of fish in the place of human victims (*pisciculi pro animis humanis*); Festus, p. 276.

¹¹ Reading *laneae*. Cf. Festus, p. 273: *pilae et effigies viriles et muliebres ex lana Compitalibus suspendebantur in conpitis*.

the origin of the Saturnalia it appears that the festival is of greater antiquity than the city of Rome, for in fact Lucius Accius¹² in his *Annals* says that its regular observance began in Greece before the foundation of Rome. [37] Here are the lines:

In most of Greece, and above all at Athens, men celebrate in honor of Saturn a festival which they always call the festival of Cronos. The day is kept a holiday, and in country and in town all usually hold joyful feasts, at which each man waits on his own slaves. And so it is with us. Thus from Greece that custom has been handed down, and slaves dine with their masters at that time.

¹² Warmington, II, 590.

CHAPTER 8

[1] We must now say a few words about the temple of Saturn itself. I find it recorded that Tullus Hostilius, after two triumphs over the Albans and a third over the Sabines, consecrated a shrine to Saturn in fulfillment of a vow and that the festival of the Saturnalia was then first instituted at Rome; although Varro in his sixth book,¹ which deals with sacred buildings, writes that King Lucius Tarquinius contracted for the building of a temple of Saturn in the Forum, but that it was the dictator Titus Larcus who dedicated it during the Saturnalia. I am aware too that in the writings of Gellius² we are told that a temple of Saturn was built by decree of the Senate and that Lucius Furius, a military tribune, was put in charge of the work.

[2] The god also has an altar in front of the Senaculum, and the rites are performed there with head uncovered, in conformity with the Greek use, because it is thought that such was the original practice, first of the Pelasgians and afterwards of Hercules.

[3] The Romans made the temple of Saturn the public treasury; because it is said that, while the god lived in Italy, no theft was committed within his borders; or else because, under him, nobody held any private property, but

It was impious to mark out the ground or part the field with
boundary stone; men garnered for the common store,

[Vergil *Georgics* I. 126]

so that the common wealth of the people would properly be placed

¹ Presumably of his *Antiquitates rerum divinarum*.

² Gnaeus Gellius, a contemporary of the Gracchi and the author of a history of Rome.

in the temple of the god under whose rule all men had all things in common.

[4] Nor must I omit to mention the horn-blowing Tritons placed on the gable of the temple of Saturn, to show that from the time of this commemoration of the god up to our own day history is, as it were, to be seen by our eyes and heard by our ears; whereas before that time it was unheard, unseen, and unknown, as witness the Tritons' tails, buried in the ground and hidden from view.

[5] Saturn, too, is represented with his feet tied together, and, although Verrius Flaccus says that he does not know the reason, my reading of Apollodorus suggests an explanation. Apollodorus says that throughout the year Saturn is bound with a bond of wool but is set free on the day of his festival, that is to say, in this present month of December. And he finds in this practice the origin of the proverb "The gods have feet of wool"—the story in fact signifying the growth to full life, in the tenth month, of the seed which has been kept alive in the womb and which, until it issues into the light of day, is confined in nature's gentle bonds.

[6] Moreover, Saturn, as Cronus, is identified with Time (χρόνος). For just as the mythographers in their fables give divergent accounts of the god, so the physicists to some extent recall a true picture of him. Thus it is said that Saturn, having cut off the privy parts of his father, Heaven, threw them into the sea and that from them Venus was born and received the name Aphrodite from the foam [ἀφρός] out of which she was formed—[7] a myth from which we are meant to understand that, while chaos lasted, times and seasons did not exist, since time has fixed measurements and those are determined by the revolution of the heavens. Cronus then is held to be the son of Heaven, and he, as we said a moment ago, is Time.³ [8] And since the seeds of all things which were to be created after the heavens flowed from the heavens and since all the elements which could comprise the complete universe drew their origin from those seeds, it followed that, when the universe had been provided with all its parts and members, then, at a fixed point in time, the process whereby seeds from the heavens caused the elements of the universe to be conceived came to an end, inasmuch as the creation of those elements had now been completed. However, the power of generating an everlasting succession

³ Cicero *De natura deorum* 2. 25. 64.

of living creatures passed from the heavenly fluid to Venus, so that thereafter all things were created by the intercourse of male and female.

[9] It is the myth of his assault on his father that has also led our authorities to call the god *Saturnus*, deriving the name from the Greek word σάθην, which means the male member, as though to say "*Sathunmus*"; and, since Satyrs are prone to lewdness, this name is thought to have the same derivation and to stand for "*Sathuni*." As for the god's attribute of a sickle,⁴ it is held by some to indicate that time reaps, cuts off, and cuts short all things.

[10] It is said that Saturn used to swallow his children⁵ and vomit them forth again, a myth likewise pointing to an identification of the god with time, by which all things in turn are created, destroyed, and brought to birth again. [11] His deposition by his son indicates, simply, that as times grow old they are superseded by the times that succeed them. His bonds point to the fact that all periods of time are by an immutable law of nature interconnected, or else to the fact that [the stalks of] all the fruits of the field are made up of cord-like substances and knots alternately arranged. [12] And the legends which relate that his sickle fell to earth in Sicily would suggest that this land is of all lands the most fertile.

⁴ See Hesiod *Theogony* 173-200; Ausonius *Eclogarium* 23. 36; Ovid *Ibis* 216.

⁵ See Hesiod *Theogony* 459.

CHAPTER 9

[1] I have reminded you that Janus reigned in company with Saturn, and I have just set out the opinions which the mythographers and the physicists hold about Saturn. I shall now proceed to set forth also the theories propounded by each of these authorities about Janus.

[2] The mythographers say that, when Janus was king, every man's house was sacred and inviolable and that for the protection thus afforded divine honors were decreed for him, the entrances into and exits from a house being dedicated to him in gratitude for his favor. [3] Xenon, too, relates in the first book of his *Italian Antiquities* that in Italy Janus was the first to build temples to the gods and to ordain religious ceremonies and that for this he was rewarded with the privilege of being for all time the first to be called on by name at a sacrifice. [4] Moreover, some think that he has received the epithet of "two-faced" because of his knowledge of the past and foreknowledge of the future.

[5] The physicists on the other hand produce strong evidence for his divinity. For there are some who identify Janus with Apollo and Diana and maintain that he combines in himself the divine attributes of both. [6] Indeed, as Nigidius, too, relates, Apollo is worshiped among the Greeks under the name of "the God of the Door" (Thyraios), and they pay honors at altars to him before their doors, showing thereby that he has power over their going out and their coming in. Among the Greeks Apollo is also called Ἀγυιεύς "the Guardian of the Streets" (Aguieus), as presiding over the streets of a city (for in Greece the streets within a city's boundaries are called ἀγυιαί); and to Diana, as Trivia, is assigned the rule over all roads. [7] At Rome all doorways are under the charge of Janus, as is evident from his name which is the Latin

equivalent of the Greek Thyraios; and he is represented as carrying a key and a rod, as the keeper of all doors and a guide on every road. [8] Nigidius declared that Apollo is Janus and that Diana is Jana, that is to say, Jana with the addition of the letter "D," which is often added to the letter "i" for the sake of euphony (as, for example, in such words as *reditur*, *redhibetur*, *redintegratur*, and the like).

[9] Some are of the opinion that Janus represents the sun and that his two faces (*geminus*) suggest his lordship over each of the two heavenly gates, since the sun's rising opens and his setting closes the day. The fact that men call on the name Janus first when any god is worshiped is held to indicate that it is through him that access may be had to the god to whom the sacrifice is being made, and that it is as it were through his doors that he suffers the prayers of suppliants to pass to the gods. [10] Again, it is as marking his connection with the sun that an image of Janus commonly shows him expressing the number three hundred with his right hand and sixty-five with his left;¹ for these numbers point to the measure of a year, and it is a special function of the sun to determine this measure.

[11] Others hold that Janus is the universe, that is to say, the heavens, and that the name is derived from *eundo*, since the universe is always in motion, wheeling in a circle and returning to itself at the point where it began. That is why Cornificius remarks, in the third book of his *Derivations*, "Cicero does not call the god 'Janus' but 'Eanus,' as though from *eundo*."² [12] And it is for this reason that the Phoenicians in their sacred rites have portrayed the god in the likeness of a serpent coiled and swallowing its own tail, as a visible image of the universe which feeds on itself and returns to itself again. [13] Thus, among us too, Janus looks toward the four quarters of the world, as for example in the statue brought from Falerii. And Gavius Bassus, in his book on the gods, says that figures of Janus have two faces, since he is the doorkeeper of both heaven and hell, and that the figures are quadriform, as though to show that his greatness embraces all the regions of the world. [14] Moreover, in the ancient songs of the Salii he is hymned as the god of gods; and Marcus Messala (who was the colleague of Gnaeus

¹ See Pliny *Historia naturalis* 34. 16. 33.

² *De natura deorum* 2. 27. 67.

Domitius in the consulship and held the office of augur for fifty-five years) begins a reference to Janus, as follows: "He it is who fashions all things and guides them; he it is who in the compass of the heavens has joined together water and earth—the force which is naturally heavy and tends to fall downward to the depths below—with fire and air, which are light by nature and tend to soar to the boundless heights above; and it is this mighty power of the heavens that has united two opposing forces."

[15] Again, in our sacred rites we invoke Janus as Janus Geminus, Janus Pater, Janus Junonius, Janus Consivius, Janus Quirinus, and Janus Patultius and Clusivius. [16] I have already explained why we call on the god as "Geminus"; we call on him as "Pater" as the god of gods; and as "Junonius" because the beginning not only of January but of all the months is his, and Juno has authority over all the Kalends—and so it is that Varro in the fifth Book of his *Antiquities of Religion* writes that twelve altars, corresponding to the twelve months, are dedicated to Janus. He is called upon as "Consivius" from *conserendo*, as the patron of "sowing," that is to say, as the patron of the propagation of the human race, whose sowing and increase are of him; and he is invoked as "Quirinus," as the lord of battles, from the spear which the Sabines call *curis*. Finally, we invoke him as "Patultius and Clusivius"³ because his doors are open (*patent*) in time of war and shut (*clauduntur* = *cluduntur*) in time of peace; and for this custom the following reason is given. [17] In the war which followed the capture of the Sabine maidens the enemy rushed to attack a certain gate (situated at the foot of the Viminal Hill and afterward, in consequence of what occurred, known as the gate of Janus) and the Romans hurried to shut it; but, after it had been shut, the gate then opened again of its own accord. This happened a second and yet a third time; and, since the gate could not be closed, a large body of armed men stood on guard before its threshold, while the fight went on fiercely elsewhere. Suddenly a rumor spread that our troops had been routed by Tatius. [18] Whereupon the men who were guarding the approach to the gate fled in terror, and the Sabines were just about to burst in through the open gate when (so the story goes) a great stream of water came gushing in a torrent through it from the temple of Janus, and

³ Cf. Ovid *Fasti* 1. 129.

large numbers of the enemy perished, either scalded by the boiling heat of the water or overwhelmed by its force and depth. It was therefore resolved to keep the doors of the temple of Janus open in time of war, as though to indicate that the god had gone forth to help the city.

So much, then, for Janus.

CHAPTER 10

[1] But to return to our account of the Saturnalia. It was held to be an offense against religion to begin a war at the time of the Saturnalia, and to punish a criminal during the days of the festival called for an act of atonement. [2] Our ancestors restricted the Saturnalia to a single day, the fourteenth before the Kalends of January, but, after Gaius Caesar had added two days to December, the day on which the festival was held became the sixteenth before the Kalends of January, with the result that, since the exact day was not commonly known—some observing the addition which Caesar had made to the calendar and others following the old usage—the festival came to be regarded as lasting for more days than one.

And yet in fact among the men of old time there were some who supposed that the Saturnalia lasted for seven days (if one may use the word “suppose” of something which has the support of competent authorities); [3] for Novius, that excellent writer of Atellan plays, says: “Long awaited they come, the seven days of the Saturnalia” [Ribbeck, II, 328]; and Mummius too, who, after Novius and Pomponius, restored the long-neglected Atellan to favor, says: “Of the many excellent institutions of our ancestors this is the best—that they made the seven days of the Saturnalia begin when the weather is coldest” [Ribbeck, II, 332].

[4] Mallius, however, says that the men who, as I have already related, had found protection in the name of Saturn and in the awe which he inspired, ordained a three-day festival in honor of the god, calling it the Saturnalia, and that it was on the authority of this belief that Augustus, in his laws for the administration of justice, ordered the three days to be kept as rest days.

[5] Masurius and others believed that the Saturnalia were held on one day, the fourteenth day before the Kalends of January, and

their opinion is corroborated by Fenestella when he says that the virgin Aemilia was condemned on the fifteenth day before the Kalends of January; for, had that day been a day on which the festival of the Saturnalia was being celebrated, she could not by any means have been called on to plead, [6] and he adds that "the day was the day which preceded the Saturnalia," and then goes on to say that "on the day after that, namely, the thirteenth day before the Kalends of January, the virgin Licinia was to plead," thereby making it clear that the thirteenth day too was not a festival.

[7] On the twelfth day before the Kalends of January there is a rest day in honor of the goddess Angeronia, to whom the pontiffs offer sacrifice in the chapel of Volupia. According to Verrius Flaccus, this goddess is called Angeronia because, duly propitiated, she banishes anxiety (*angores*) and mental distress. [8] Masurius adds that an image of this goddess, with the mouth bound up and sealed,¹ is placed on the altar of Volupia, because all who conceal their pain and care find, thanks to their endurance, great joy (*voluptas*) at last. [9] According to Julius Modestus, however, sacrifices are offered to Angeronia because, pursuant to the fulfillment of a vow, she delivered the Roman people from the disease known as the quinsy (*angina*).

[10] The eleventh day before the Kalends of January is a rest day in honor of the Lares, for whom the praetor Aemilius Regillus in the war against Antiochus solemnly promised to provide a temple in the Campus Martius.

[11] The tenth day before the Kalends is a rest day in honor of Jupiter, called the Larentinalia. I should like to say something of this day, and here are the beliefs generally held about it.

[12] In the reign of Ancus, they say, a sacristan of the temple of Hercules, having nothing to do during the rest day challenged the god to a game of dice,² throwing for both players himself, and the stake for which they played was a dinner and the company of a courtesan. [13] Hercules won, and so the sacristan shut up Acca Larentia³ in the temple (she was the most notable courtesan of the

¹ Cf. Pliny *Historia naturalis* 3. 5. 65.

² For Hercules and the throwing of dice, see Pausanias 7. 5. 10 and Frazer's *Pausanias*, IV, 173.

³ Cf. Aulus Gellius 7. 7.

time) and the dinner with her. Next day the woman let it be known that the god as a reward for her favors had bidden her take advantage of the first opportunity that came to her on her way home. [14] It so happened that, after she had left the temple, one Carutius, captivated by her beauty, accosted her, and in compliance with his wishes she married him. On her husband's death all his estate came into her hands, and, when she died, she named the Roman people her heir. [15] Ancus therefore had her buried in the Velabrum, the most frequented part of the city, and a yearly rite was instituted in her honor, at which sacrifice was offered by a priest to her departed spirit—the rest day being dedicated to Jupiter because it was believed of old that souls are given by him and are given back to him again after death. [16] Cato, however, says that Larentia, enriched by the profits of her profession, left lands known as the Turacian, Semurian, Lintirian, and Solinian⁴ lands to the Roman people after her death and was therefore deemed worthy of a splendid tomb and the honor of an annual service of remembrance. [17] But Macer, in the first Book of his *Histories*, maintains that Acca Larentia was the wife of Faustulus and the nurse of Romulus and Remus and that in the reign of Romulus she married a wealthy Etruscan named Carutius, succeeded to her husband's wealth as his heir, and afterward left it to her foster child Romulus, who dutifully appointed a memorial service and a festival in her honor.

[18] One can infer, then, from all that has been said, that the Saturnalia lasted but one day and was held only on the fourteenth day before the Kalends of January; it was on this day alone that the shout of "Io Saturnalia" would be raised, in the temple of Saturn, at a riotous feast. Now, however, during the celebration of the Saturnalia, this day is allotted to the festival of the Opalia, although the day was first assigned to Saturn and Ops in common.

[19] Men believed that the goddess Ops was the wife of Saturn and that both the Saturnalia and the Opalia are held in this month of December because the produce of the fields and orchards are thought to be the discovery of these two deities, who, when men have gathered in the fruits of the earth, are worshiped therefore as the givers of a more civilized life. [20] Some too are of the opinion

⁴ Perhaps the *ager Solonius* to which reference is made in Livy 8. 12. 2. Cf. Cicero *Epistulae ad Atticum* 2. 3. 3.

that Saturn and Ops represent heaven and earth, the name Saturn being derived from the word for growth from seed (*satus*), since such growth is the gift of heaven, and the name Ops being identified with earth, either because it is by her bounty (*ops*) that life is nourished or because the name comes from the toil (*opus*) which is needed to bring forth the fruits of trees and fields. [21] When men make prayer to Ops they sit and are careful to touch the earth, signifying thereby that the earth is the very mother of mortals and is to be approached as such.

[22] Philochorus says that Cecrops was the first to build, in Attica, an altar to Saturn and Ops, worshiping these deities as Jupiter and Earth, and to ordain that, when crops and fruits had been garnered, the head of a household everywhere should eat thereof in company with the slaves with whom he had borne the toil of cultivating the land, for it was well pleasing to the god that honor should be paid to the slaves in consideration of their labor. And that is why we follow the practice of a foreign land and offer sacrifice to Saturn with the head uncovered.

[23] I think that we have now given abundant proof that the festival of the Saturnalia used to be celebrated on only one day, the fourteenth before the Kalends of January, but that it was afterward prolonged to last three days: first, in consequence of the days which Caesar added to the month of December, and then in pursuance of an edict of Augustus which prescribed a series of three rest days for the Saturnalia. The festival therefore begins on the sixteenth day before the Kalends of January and ends on the fourteenth, which used to be the only day of its celebration.⁵ [24] However, the addition of the feast of the Sigillaria has extended the time of general excitement and religious rejoicing to seven days.

⁵ See notes by Watson and by How, in their editions of select letters of Cicero, on *secundis Saturnalibus* (*Epistulae ad Atticum* 13. 52. 1).

CHAPTER 11

[1] Oh, said Evangelus, this is something that I cannot stand any longer: that our friend Praetextatus, to parade his learning and show how well he can talk, alike chose a moment ago to ascribe the practice of slaves taking meals with their masters to the cult of some god—as if, indeed, the gods would take any account of slaves or as if any sensible man would disgrace his house by keeping such low company in it—and is seeking now to refer to a religious rite the festival of the Sigillaria, the festival at which we amuse infants in arms with little masks of clay. He is regarded as a leading authority on matters of religion, and he makes that an excuse for bringing in the element of superstition. In fact, it would seem as if some divine law forbade us ever to disbelieve him.

[2] All shuddered at these words, but Praetextatus only smiled and said: I am quite willing, Evangelus, for you to regard me as superstitious and unworthy of credence, if I fail to give reasons to prove to you that both my statements are true. Let us speak of the slaves first. Are you joking or in earnest when you suggest that there are human beings whom the immortal gods regard as beneath their divine care and providence? Or perhaps you refuse to reckon a slave a human being? Let me tell you, then, what deep resentment was felt in heaven at the punishment of a slave.

[3] In the four hundred and seventy-fourth year after the foundation of Rome a certain Autronius Maximus, after flogging one of his slaves, had him fastened to a gibbet and led through the Circus before the beginning of the Games.¹ This conduct angered Jupiter, and he ordered a certain Annius in a dream to inform the Senate of his displeasure at the brutal act. [4] Annius, however, concealed the matter; whereupon his son died unexpectedly, and

¹ Cf. Livy 2. 36; Cicero *De divinatione* 1. 26. 55.

after a second warning, which too was disregarded, the man himself suddenly became paralyzed. So at last, by the advice of his friends, he was carried to the Senate in a litter and told his tale. Hardly had he finished speaking when he was immediately restored to health and left the House on foot. [5] To propitiate Jupiter, therefore, a decree of the Senate and the Maenian Law added a day to those Games in the Circus, the day being called *instauraticius*, not (as some suppose) from the gibbet—*σταυρὸς* in Greek—but to mark the restoration of Annius to health, for according to Varro the word *instaurare* is equivalent to *instar novare*, to renew.

[6] You see, then, Evangelus, what grave concern the greatest of the gods felt for a slave. But how do you come to have this bitter and groundless contempt for slaves, as though they were not made of and nourished by the same elements as yourself, drawing the breath of life as you do, and that from the same first principle?

[7] For reflect, I pray you, that those whom you call your chattels are born in the same way as you, enjoy the same sky, live like you, and die like you. "They are slaves," you say.² No, they are human beings. You repeat, "They are slaves." Very well then, they are your fellow slaves, if you will but bear in mind that you are as much at the mercy of fortune as they are. You may live to see your slave a free man and he to see you a slave. How old was Hecuba when she became a slave? How old was Croesus? The mother of Darius? Diogenes? Plato himself? [8] And, after all, why do we shudder so at the word slavery? Of course a man may be a slave, but it was his destiny, and it may well be that, although he is a slave, his spirit is free. The fact that he is a slave will be to his prejudice only if I can point to someone who is not a slave. For one man is a slave to lust, another to greed, another to a desire for power; all men are slaves to hope and all to fear. Assuredly, no form of slavery is more shameful than that which is self-imposed; [9] and yet, while we spurn as a worthless wretch one bent beneath the yoke which fate has placed upon him, we refuse to tolerate any criticism of the yoke which we have put upon our own necks.

[10] You will find among slaves one whom no bribe can tempt, and again you will find a master kissing the hands of another man's slaves in the hope of gain. I shall judge my fellow men, then, not by their lot in life but by their character, since a man's character is

² Seneca *Epistulae* 47; John of Salisbury 8. 12 (756a-757c).

his gift to himself, but his status is assigned to him by chance. For just as a man is a fool who in buying a horse looks at its saddle-cloth and bridle instead of at the animal's points, so the biggest of fools is the man who thinks that a fellow man should be judged by his clothing or by his rank (which is no more than a garment to clothe us).

[11] No, my good Evangelus, it is not only in the Forum and Senate House that you should seek a friend; look carefully, and you will find one in your home as well. All that you have to do is to show kindness and courtesy to the slave with whom you live, conversing with him and sometimes taking counsel with him as with a friend. Certainly it was that the master might never be the object of ill will nor the slave of insult that our ancestors called the master the father of the household and the slaves its members.

[12] And so, take my advice; let your slaves feel respect for you rather than fear.

Perhaps someone will say that I am now degrading the master and, so to speak, emancipating the slave, in asserting, as I have, that a slave should show respect rather than fear. But to think thus will be to forget that what is enough for the gods is not too little for the master. Moreover, an object of respect is also an object of affection, and affection cannot be coupled with fear.

[13] What do you suppose was the origin of that oft-quoted and arrogant proverb which says that in every slave we possess we have an enemy? They are not our natural enemies, but we make them our enemies by the inordinate pride, insolence, and cruelty that we show toward them, when luxurious living makes us so prone to anger that to be crossed in anything leads to an outburst of violent rage. [14] For at home we assume the guise of passionate tyrants and seek to exercise over our slaves the full power permitted to us rather than to limit that power to what is fit and proper. And indeed, to say nothing of other kinds of cruelty, there are masters who, as they greedily gorge themselves with the abundance of their tables, refuse to allow the slaves who stand around them to move their lips even to speak, but every sound is checked with the rod. It may be accidental, but it does not escape the blows, and a cough, a sneeze, or a hiccup is punished with a severe thrashing. [15] That is why these slaves who may not speak before their master speak of him behind his back. But those who were free to speak not only

in their master's presence but also with him, whose mouths were not, so to speak, sewn up, they were found ready to lay down their lives for their master and to bring on their own heads the danger which threatened him; they would speak at table, but under torture they would hold their tongues.

[16] Would you have me review instances of the action of generous feelings in the heart of a slave? Hear, then, first, the story of Urbinus. He had been condemned to death and was in hiding on his estate at Reate, but the hiding place was betrayed. Whereupon one of his slaves, to represent him, put on his master's ring and garments, lay down in the bedroom into which the pursuers were forcing their way, offered his neck to the swords as the soldiers entered and received the blow intended for his master. Urbinus was afterward restored to his former position and then erected a monument to the slave, with an inscription to tell the story of his devotion.

[17] Aesopus, a freedman of Demosthenes, who was privy to his late master's adultery with Julia, was for long put to the torture but steadfastly refused to betray his patron, until Demosthenes, convicted by the evidence of others who also knew the facts, himself confessed.

[18] That you may not argue that it is easy for one man to keep a secret, take the case of Labienus. No form of torture prevailed to make his freedmen reveal the place in which they had helped him to hide. And that none may say that the freedmen showed this loyalty out of gratitude for the gift of freedom rather than from any innate goodness of heart, let me tell you of generosity shown toward his master by a slave who had himself received punishment at that master's hand. [19] Antius Restio had been proscribed and was fleeing, alone and by night. But, while the other slaves were plundering the man's goods, one who had been put in irons and branded on the forehead was set free, after his master's condemnation, by a compassionate stranger. This slave went in search of his fugitive master, urged him to be of good courage—for he knew, he said, that it was not his master but his own fate that should be regarded as responsible for the outrage he had suffered—hid him, and ministered to his needs. [20] Later, when he saw that the pursuers were at hand, the slave killed an old man whom he chanced to meet, built a pyre, and threw the body on it. When the

pyre was alight, he ran to meet the men who were looking for Restio, saying that he had avenged himself on the proscribed man and had inflicted on him far crueller treatment than he had himself received from him. The slave was believed, and Restio was saved.³

[21] Then there is the story of Caepio. He had been minded to kill Augustus, and, after the discovery of his crime and his subsequent condemnation, he was conveyed by a slave to the Tiber in a chest, taken to Ostia, and brought thence by night to his father's country house near Laurentum. Later, when the pair were shipwrecked at Cumae, the slave hid Caepio secretly at Naples; and, when captured by a centurion, neither bribes nor threats could induce him to betray his fugitive master.

[22] When Asinius Pollio was seeking to compel the men of Padua to surrender their money and arms, they went into hiding to escape the harsh demand. A reward and their freedom were offered to any slaves who would betray their masters, but, as is well known, in no single instance was the bribe effective.

[23] Let me now tell you a story to illustrate a display not only of fidelity but also of a kindly and fertile ingenuity in slaves. At the siege of Grumentum certain slaves left their mistress and went over to the enemy. When the town had fallen, these slaves, in accordance with an agreed plan, attacked their house and dragged the woman out with every appearance of threatening to wreak vengeance on her, crying out to all that met them that at last they had the chance to punish a cruel mistress. But after carrying their mistress away as though to kill her, they protected her with the greatest respect and loyalty.

[24] You will find too a man of servile status displaying a greatness of heart that preferred death to disgrace. For Gaius Vettius, a Pelignian from Italica, when seized by his own troops for surrender to Pompey, was killed by his slave, who then took his own life rather than survive his master. [25] When Gaius Gracchus was fleeing from the Aventine, a slave named Euporus (or, as some say, Philocrates) refused to leave his side while any hope of safety remained and protected him in every way he could; but afterward, when his master was killed, he stabbed himself in the bowels and breathed his last over the body. [26] When Publius Scipio himself, the father of Africanus, was wounded in a battle with Hannibal

³ Cf. Martial 3. 21.

and the rest of his men were deserting him, he was placed on a horse by a slave who single-handed brought him safely through to camp.

[27] If it is a small matter to have shown devotion to a master while he was alive, what of the spirit shown too by a slave who exacts retribution for a master after his death? For example, when king Seleucus had been killed by a friend, a slave of his became that friend's slave and avenged his former master by stabbing his murderer as he dined.

[28] Again, I find combined in the person of a single slave two virtues which to a high degree give distinction also to men of noble birth—the ability to exercise sovereign power and the greatness of heart which can think lightly of such power. [29] For Anaxilaus of Messana, the founder of Messana in Sicily and the tyrant of Rhegium, was content to have entrusted to the care of his slave Micythus the children of tender age whom he was leaving behind him at his death. Micythus was conscientious in the performance of his duty as guardian of the children and ruled the city so mildly that the men of Rhegium did not disdain to be governed by a slave. Afterward, when the boys came of age, he handed over their property and the sovereignty of the state to them, and he himself, taking only a small sum of money for the journey, went away to Olympia where he lived to a peaceful old age.

[30] There are many instructive examples too of public service rendered by men of servile status. Thus, in the [second] Punic War, when there was a shortage of citizens for enlistment in the army, slaves who undertook to fight in place of their masters were given the citizenship and called volunteers (*volones*), because their undertaking was voluntary. [31] Moreover, after the defeat at Cannae eight thousand slaves were bought to serve in the army; and, although it would have cost less to ransom the prisoners, the Romans in that emergency chose rather to entrust the defense of the state to slaves.⁴ And after the memorable and disastrous losses at the battle of Lake Trasimene, freedmen also were called on to take the oath for military service.

[32] In the Social War twelve cohorts of freedmen were enlisted and served with evident and notable valor. We know too that Gaius Caesar, when he was replacing casualties in his army, accepted

⁴ Livy 22. 57.

slaves from his friends and made use of their gallant services. And Caesar Augustus also enrolled several cohorts of freedmen in Germany and Illyricum and gave them the title of "volunteers" (*voluntariae*).

[33] You must not suppose that such practices were peculiar to Rome. For, when the tribes that live near the river Borysthenes were attacked by Zopyrion, they liberated slaves, enfranchised aliens, and abolished debts, and so were able to withstand the enemy. [34] At Sparta, when only fifteen hundred Lacedaemonians were left fit to bear arms, Cleomenes raised an army of nine thousand men from manumitted slaves. And the Athenians too, when the resources of the state were exhausted, freed slaves.

[35] Nor should you conclude that examples of meritorious actions are confined to male slaves, for here is a story of a deed done by female slaves,⁵ which is no less memorable than those which I have recounted and as beneficial to the state as any service you would find rendered by any persons of noble birth. [36] It is common knowledge that the Nones of July is the Festival of the Handmaids, both the origin of and the reason for this celebration being well known, for on that day women, free and slaves together, offer sacrifice to Juno Caprotina under a wild fig tree, to commemorate the generous courage with which female slaves were inspired to save the honor of Rome. [37] The occasion was after the capture of the city by the Gauls, when (although the Gallic rising had been put down) the resources of Rome were at such low ebb that her neighbors were on the lookout for an opportunity to attack her. They made Postumius Livius, the chief magistrate of Fidenae, their leader, and he sent and bade the Senate of Rome, if they wished what was left of their city to survive, to hand over to him their married women and unmarried daughters. [38] The Senators hesitated in anxious debate, but a female slave named Tutela (or Philotis) promised that she and the rest of the maidservants would represent their mistresses and surrender in their place. They therefore assumed the dress of the matrons and their daughters and, followed by a company whose tears gave convincing evidence of grief, were delivered to the enemy. [39] In the camp—on the pretense that the day was celebrated as a feast day at Rome—they freely plied with wine the men to whom they had been allotted by

⁵ Fowler, *Festivals*, p. 177.

Livius, and, when they had stupified them with drink, they sent a signal to the Romans from a wild fig tree near the camp. [40] A sudden attack by the Romans was successful, and the Senate in gratitude ordered all the slaves to be manumitted, gave them dowries from the public funds, and allowed them to wear the style of dress which they had assumed. The day itself was named *Nonae Caprotinae*, after that wild fig tree (*caprificus*) from which the signal that led to the victory was received; and it was resolved that there should be a yearly festival and sacrifice, at which the juice of the wild fig tree should be offered in memory of the deed to which I have referred.

[41] Nor is the intelligence of a slave unsuited to or incapable of the study of philosophy. Phaedo (one of the disciples of Socrates and so close a friend of both Socrates and Plato that the latter named after him his inspired book on the immortality of the soul) was a slave, although his person and his talents were those of a free man. Cebes, himself a follower of Socrates, is said to have bought him, at the latter's instigation, and to have had him trained in philosophy. Phaedo afterward won fame as a philosopher, and his discourses on Socrates, which show very great taste, are still read.⁶

[42] There were not a few other slaves, too, who afterward became distinguished philosophers, and among them the well-known Menippus whose books Marcus Varro has sought to rival in the satires which he calls "Menippean," although others call them "Cynic." Furthermore, Pompylus, a slave of Theophrastus the Peripatetic, a slave of Zeno the Stoic called Perseus, and a slave of Epicurus whose name was Mys were philosophers of note who lived at that time. Diogenes the Cynic was also a slave, although he was in fact a free man who had been sold into slavery. [43] When Xenias of Corinth, wishing to buy him, asked him whether he knew anything in the way of a trade, he replied: "I know how to govern free men (*liberi*)."⁶ Whereupon Xenias, struck by this reply, bought him and set him free, and entrusted his children to him, with the words: "Take my children (*liberi*) and govern them."

[44] As for the famous philosopher Epictetus, he is too fresh in our memories for the fact that he also was a slave to be reckoned among things forgotten and unknown. [45] And two verses of his, written of himself, are quoted, in which you may find the further

⁶ Aulus Gellius 2. 18. Cf. Athenaeus 11. 507c.

hidden meaning that those whose lives are a struggle against sorrows of many kinds are not necessarily hated by the gods:

Slave, poor as Irus, halting as I trod,
I, Epictetus, was the friend of God.⁷

[46] You now have a case made out, I think, to prove that the name of slave is not to be regarded with aversion and contempt, since even Jupiter has been moved to take thought for a slave; and it has been established that many slaves have shown themselves to be loyal, prudent, brave—and even philosophers.

I must now deal briefly with the *Sigillaria*, for I would not have you think that I spoke of a matter calling for a smile rather than reverence.

[47] Epicadus relates that Hercules after killing Geryon drove his herds in triumph through Italy and from a bridge (now known as the Sublician Bridge), which had been built for the occasion, cast into the river a number of human figures equal to the number of the comrades he had chanced to lose on his journey, his object being to ensure that these figures might be carried by the current to the sea and so, as it were, to restore to their ancestral homes the bodies of the dead.⁸ This is said to have been the origin of the practice, which has persisted, of including the making of such figures in a religious rite. [48] In my opinion, however, a truer account of the origin of this practice is that which, I remember, I recently recalled,⁹ namely, that, when the Pelasgians learned, by a happier interpretation of the words, that “heads” meant heads of clay not heads of living men and came to understand that *φωτὸς* meant “of a light” as well as “of a man,” they began to kindle wax tapers in honor of Saturn, in preference to their former ritual, and to carry little masks to the chapel of Dis, which adjoins the altar of Saturn, instead of human heads. [49] Thence arose the traditional custom of sending round wax tapers at the Saturnalia and of making and selling little figures of clay for men to offer to Saturn, on behalf of Dis, as an act of propitiation for themselves and their families. [50] So it is that the regular use of such articles of trade

⁷ *Anthologia Graeca* 7. 676. Tr. H. Macnaghten, *Verses Ancient and Modern* (London, 1911).

⁸ Cf. Ovid *Fasti* 5. 650-60.

⁹ See above, 7. 31.

begins at the Saturnalia and lasts for seven days. These days, in consequence, are only rest days (*feriatus*), not all of them are festivals. For we have shown that the day in the middle, namely the thirteenth day before the Kalends of January,¹⁰ was a day for legal business; and this has been attested by other statements made by those who have given a fuller account of the arrangement of the year, months, and days, and of the regulation of the calendar by Gaius Caesar.

¹⁰ See above, 10. 6.

CHAPTER 12

[1] At this point Praetextatus thought to end his discourse, but Aurelius Symmachus interposed, saying: Please go on, for it is a pleasure to listen to you, and tell us also how the year is ordered,¹ before you find yourself put to the trouble of having to answer questions, should any of the present company be ignorant of the old arrangement of the year or of the more exact rules by which that arrangement has subsequently been changed. Indeed, I suggest that by your reference to the addition of days to the month of December you have yourself encouraged your audience to look for information on this subject. Thereupon Praetextatus took up the thread of his exposition and continued as follows.

[2] The Egyptians,² he said, are the only people who have always had an exact method of determining the measurement of the year. With other nations the methods varied; and, although the numbering might be different, all alike were in error. It will be enough, then, if I refer to the customs which obtained in a few countries. Thus, in Arcadia the year was arranged into three months; in Acarnania into six; and the rest of the Greeks reckoned that their own year properly consisted of three hundred and fifty-four days.

[3] With these variations it is not surprising that of old Rome too had its own year, arranged—on the authority of Romulus—in a series of ten months. The year used to begin in March and to consist of three hundred and four days: six months having thirty days each, namely, April, June, Sextilis, September, November, and

¹ In connection with this subject reference should be made to Fowler, *Festivals*. See also Ovid's *Fasti*, Plutarch's *Numa*, and Bede *De temporum ratione* 11-13.

² Cf. Herodotus 2. 4.

December; and four comprising thirty-one days each, namely, March, May, Quintilis and October; and today, too, in these four months the Nones fall on the seventh day, whereas in the rest of the months they fall on the fifth. [4] When the Nones fall on the seventh day of the month, the Kalends would return seventeen days after the Ides, but, when the Nones fell on the fifth day, the Kalends would begin again eighteen days after the Ides.

[5] Such was the arrangement made by Romulus; and he dedicated the first month of the year to his father, Mars. That March was the first month of the year is shown most clearly by the fact that Quintilis is the fifth month after it and that thereafter the months took their names from their numerical order. [6] Moreover, on the first day of March a new fire was kindled on the altars of Vesta, that the charge to keep a new fire alight might begin with the beginning of the year. At the beginning of March, too, new laurel wreaths replaced the old in the Royal Palace (*Regia*) and also in the meeting places of the Tribes and in the houses of the flamens; and in the same month people went to Anna Perenna to offer public and private sacrifices for prosperity throughout the year and for years to come. [7] In March schoolmasters were paid their dues for the year that had been completed; the Assemblies held their first meeting; the taxes were put out to farm; and matrons would wait on their slaves at dinner, just as the masters of the household did at the Saturnalia—the women by this compliment calling on the slaves at the beginning of the year to give ready obedience, the men rendering thanks for service done.

[8] Romulus called the second month April, or "Aphril" as some suppose, who would spell the word with an aspirate, after the Greek word for the foam (ἀφρός) from which Venus is believed to have sprung. It is said that it was the intention of Romulus to name the first month after his father Mars and the second after Venus the mother of Aeneas and thus to make the beginnings of the year the special care of these deities, from whom Rome traced her origin—since today too in our sacred rites we call Mars our "father" and Venus our "mother." [9] But others suppose that Romulus showed a deeper understanding, or even acted under the sure guidance of divine providence, in so arranging the initial months as to assign the first to Mars, often the slayer of men—in the words of Homer, who knew the god's nature:

Ares, blood-stained Ares, bane of men and sacker of cities

[*Iliad* 5. 31]

and then to dedicate the second to Venus, as the goddess whose kindly influence was such as to appease the other's violence. [10] Certainly in the twelve signs of the Zodiac as well, each of which is held to be the appointed abode of an appointed deity, the first sign, the Ram, has been allotted to Mars and thereafter the next in order, the Bull, to Venus. [11] Again, the Scorpion, which is placed over against these two signs, is so divided as to be common to Mars and Venus. And in this division there is held to be evidence of a divine plan, for the hinder part of the Scorpion, which is armed with a sting as with a powerful dart, is the house of Mars, and the part in front, which the Greeks call "the Yoke" and we call "the Balance," belongs to Venus, who (as it were with a yoke of harmony) joins in marriage and unites in friendship.

[12] Cingius, however, in the treatise on the calendar which he has left us, says that certain writers show their ignorance in supposing that the ancients named the month of April after Venus, since in the course of this month no festival, no notable sacrifice, was appointed in her honor by our ancestors, nor are her praises sung, as are those of the other deities, even in the hymns of the Salii. [13] Varro, too, agrees with Cingius, stating that even in the time of the kings the name of Venus, in either its Latin or its Greek form, was unknown at Rome, so that the month of April could not have been named after her. [14] But, whereas before the vernal equinox the sky is generally dull and overcast, the sea closed to shipping, and the land itself covered with water, frost, or snow, and whereas in the spring, that is to say in the month of April, all the above become open (*aperiantur*), and the trees too, and everything else that the earth holds, begin to open out into buds, we must understand that it is from all these signs of opening that the month is deservedly called *Aprilis*, as though for *Aperilis*—just as at Athens the corresponding month is called Anthesterion, because everything is then in flower.³ [15] Nevertheless, Verrius Flaccus admits that it was afterward ordained that matrons should offer sacrifice to Venus on the day of the vernal equinox;⁴ but, since the

³ In this month the Anthesteria, or "Festival of Flowers," was held at Athens.

⁴ See Fowler, *Festivals*, p. 67.

reason for this practice is out of place here, I must refrain from discussing it.

[16] Romulus gave May the third place, and there is a wide divergence of views among the authorities about the name of this month. Fulvius Nobilior, in the calendar which he deposited in the temple of Hercules "Leader of the Muses," says that Romulus, after dividing the people into "older" (*maiores*) and "younger" (*iuniores*)—to the end that the former should protect the state by counsel and the latter by arms—honored each class by calling this month May (*Maius*) and the month that followed, June (*Junius*).⁵

[17] Some relate that this month was transferred to our calendar from the calendar of Tusculum, which still has a reference to a god corresponding to Jupiter and called *Maius*, the name, that is to say, being derived from his greatness and majesty. [18] Cingius thinks that the month takes its name from Maia, whom he calls the wife of Vulcan, and he points by way of proof to the fact that the priest of Vulcan offers sacrifice to this goddess on the Kalends of May; but Piso says that Vulcan's wife is called Maiesta not Maia.

[19] Others maintain that it was Maia the mother of Mercury who gave her name to the month,⁶ and they find the strongest proof of their theory in the fact that in this month all merchants sacrifice to Maia and Mercury together. [20] Some assert (and Cornelius Labeo agrees with them) that the Maia to whom sacrifice is offered in the month of May is the earth, and that Earth received the name Maia from its great size (*magnitudine*)—just as in the course of her rites Maia is also called the Great Mother—and they, further, infer the truth of this opinion of theirs from the practice of sacrificing to the goddess a pregnant sow, which is the victim properly offered to Earth. They say too that Mercury is associated with the goddess in the rites because a human being receives the power of utterance at birth by contact with the earth, and, as we know, Mercury is the god of utterance and speech. [21] Cornelius Labeo is the authority for the statement that it was on the Kalends of May that a temple was dedicated to Maia, as the Earth, under the name of the Good Goddess, and he affirms that it can be shown from the more secret ritual itself of the sacrifice that the Good Goddess and Earth are identical. He adds that in the books of the pontiffs this same goddess is invoked as the Good Goddess and as Fauna, Ops,

⁵ Bede *De temporum ratione* 12. 20. ⁶ *Ibid.*, 12. 21.

and Fatua—[22] as Good, because she is the source of all that is good for the maintenance of our life; as Fauna, because she is favorable (*favet*) to everything that serves the needs of living creatures; as Ops [help], because it is on her help that life depends; and as Fatua, from *fando* (speech), since, as we have just said, infants at birth cannot utter a sound until they have touched the earth.

[23] There are those who say that this goddess has the power of Juno and for that reason bears a royal scepter in her left hand. Others believe that she is to be identified with Proserpine and say that sacrifice is made to her with a sow, because a sow devoured the crops which Ceres gave to mortals. Others again hold that she is "Hecate of the Nether World," and the Boeotians, that she is Semele. [24] It is said too that she was the daughter of Faunus and that she resisted the amorous advances of her father, who even beat her with a rod of myrtle because, although plied by him with wine, she did not yield to his desires. There is, however, a belief that her father changed himself into a serpent and had intercourse with his daughter under that guise. [25] In support of all these beliefs the following evidence is adduced: that it is a sacrilege for a myrtle rod to be found in her temple; that a vine is spread above her head, since it was on this that her father had chiefly relied in his attempt to seduce her; that it is not the custom to bring wine into her temple under its own name, but the vessel containing the wine is named a honey jar and the wine is called milk; and that there are serpents in her temple which, indifferent to their surroundings, neither cause nor feel fear. [26] Some identify the goddess with Medea, because herbs of all kinds are brought into her temple, from which the priestesses commonly make medicaments, and also because no man may enter the temple on account of the wrong suffered by Medea at the hands of her thankless husband Jason. [27] In Greece she is called the "Goddess of Women," and Varro (who says that she was the daughter of Faunus) adds that she was so modest that she never went outside the women's quarters, that her name was never heard in public, and that she never saw, or was seen by, a man—this being the reason why no man enters her temple. [28] And here too is the reason why in Italy women may not take part in the rites of Hercules. For, when Hercules was bringing the cattle of Geryon through Italy, a woman in reply to his request for water to quench his thirst said that she could not

give him any because the day was the feast of the Goddess of Women and it was unlawful for a man to taste of anything that had been prepared for the goddess. Hercules therefore, when about to offer sacrifice, solemnly banned the presence of women and ordered Potitius and Pinarius, who had the charge of his rites, not to allow any woman to be present at them. [29] You see, then, how, having had occasion to consider the name Maia and having identified Maia with Earth and with the Good Goddess, we have had to relate all that we have ascertained about the latter.

[30] June⁷ follows May, and the name of the month is derived either (as I have already said) from the name given to a section of the people or (as Cingius thinks) from the fact that it was previously called Junonius in Latium and for long appeared under this name in the calendars of Aricia and Praeneste. Indeed, as Nisus says in his *Commentaries on the Calendar*, our ancestors for long continued to use this name for the month, but later certain letters dropped out and from Junonius the month came to be called Junius. And certainly it was on the Kalends of June that a temple was dedicated to Juno Moneta. [31] Some have thought that the month of June takes its name from Junius Brutus (Rome's first consul), because it was in this month, on the Kalends of June, that he sacrificed to the goddess Carna on the Caelian Hill, after the expulsion of Tarquin, in performance of a vow. [32] Carna is believed to be the goddess concerned with the care of man's vital organs, and it is to her that one prays for the good preservation of the liver and heart and all the inward parts; and, since it was thanks to his heart that Brutus practiced the deception which won him a reputation for stupidity⁸ and so enabled him to come forward and reform the state, he honored with a temple the goddess who has the care of these vital organs. [33] Offerings are made to her of bean pottage and bacon, since these foods give strength to the body; and the Kalends of June are commonly called the Kalends of the Beans, because in this month ripe beans are added to the sacrificial offerings.

[34] July follows—the month which, when March held the first place in the year, was called Quintilis from its numerical position in the order of the months as prescribed by Romulus; and it kept this name even after the months of January and February had been placed by Numa before March, although it was then, clearly, no

⁷ Bede *De temporum ratione* 12. 23.

⁸ Livy 1. 56.

longer the fifth month but the seventh. Subsequently, however, in pursuance of a law proposed by Marcus (son of Marcus) Antonius as consul, the month was called July in honor of the dictator Julius Caesar, because he was born on the twelfth day of this month.

[35] August is the next month, and it used formerly to be called Sextilis, until its complimentary dedication to Augustus, pursuant to a decree of the Senate, of which the terms are as follows: "Whereas it is in the month of Sextilis that the Emperor Caesar Augustus has assumed his first consulate and has thrice⁹ entered the city in triumph and that the legions have marched down from the Janiculum faithfully following his leadership; and whereas it is in this month that Egypt has been brought under the power of the Roman people and it is in this month that civil wars have been ended; and whereas for these reasons this month is and has been the happiest of months for this Empire: resolved that this month be called Augustus." Likewise, on the same grounds, a plebiscite was made on a motion put to the people by Sextus Pacuvius, a tribune.

[36] The month of September keeps its original name. Domitian indeed had imposed on it the name of Germanicus and had given his own to October. [37] But, when it was resolved to erase an ill-omened name from every monument of bronze or stone that bore it, these months too were divested of the titles which a tyrant had compelled them to bear. All subsequent emperors were careful to avoid the unhappy consequences of an ill omen, and so the months from September to December retained their ancient names.

[38] Such were the rules made by Romulus to measure the year. By his arrangement it was, as I have already said, a year of ten months and of three hundred and four days; the months being so disposed that four had thirty-one days each and six had thirty. [39] But, since this method of reckoning agreed neither with the course of the sun nor the phases of the moon, it sometimes happened that the cold season fell in the summer months and, on the other hand, the hot season in the winter months; and, on these occasions, as many days were allowed to pass unassigned to any named month as were needed to make the current month fit the season of the year and the appearance of the sky.

⁹ Augustus celebrated triumphs on August 6, 7, and 8, 29 B.C. for victories in Dalmatia, at Actium, and at Alexandria. Cf. Vergil *Aeneid* 8. 714; Horace *Odes* 1. 2. 49; Suetonius *Augustus* 22; and Mommsen, *Res Gestae d. Augusti*, p. 9.

CHAPTER 13¹

[1] Romulus was succeeded by Numa. From such knowledge as he could acquire with only his natural genius to teach him—living, as he did, in an unkindly climate and in an age that was still uncivilized—or perhaps learning something from the practice of the Greeks, Numa added fifty days to the year, to enlarge it to three hundred and fifty-four days, the period which he believed to correspond with the completion of twelve circuits of the moon. [2] To these fifty additional days he added six others, by taking one from each of the six months which had thirty days apiece, and the fifty-six days thus made available he divided equally to make two new months. [3] The first of those two months he named January and made it the first month of the year, as the month of the two-faced god who looks back to the year that is past and forward to the beginnings of the year to come. The second month he dedicated to Februus, the god who is believed to have charge over ceremonies of purification; for it was necessary that the city should be purified in the month in which Numa ordained the payment of due rites to the departed spirits.

[4] Afterward the neighboring peoples followed Numa's arrangement and began to reckon their year with the same number of days and months as he, but with this single difference, that they made their months consist of twenty-nine and thirty days alternately.

[5] A little later, in honor of the odd number² (a mystery which

¹ See Bede *De temporum ratione* 11.

² Cf. Vergil *Eclogues* 8. 75 and *Ciris* 373: *numero deus impari gaudet*. A belief that odd numbers (and usually the odd numbers up to nine) are "lucky" or in some other way significant is often found in folklore. The belief has been held to be based on the fact that an odd number cannot be divided into two equal parts.

nature had brought to light even before the time of Pythagoras) Numa added a day to the year and assigned this day to January, in order that the principle of the odd number might be preserved and both the year and each month, with the sole exception of February, consist of an odd number of days. For, in a series of twelve months, if each month contained either an even or an odd number of days, the total number of days would be an even number, but to give one of the months an even number of days made the total of the number of days in the year an odd number. [6] And so it was ordained that January, April, June, Sextilis, September, November, and December should be months of twenty-nine days each, with the Nones falling on the fifth day of the month, and, in all of them, the day after the Ides being reckoned the seventeenth day before the next Kalends; [7] but March, May, Quintilis, and October had thirty-one days, with the Nones falling on the seventh day of the month, and in each of these months too (as in the other seven months) the period after the Ides up to [and including] the following Kalends comprising seventeen days. February alone kept its twenty-eight days, as though the shortness of the month and the even number of its days befitted the denizens of the world below.

[8] In consequence of this division of the year by Numa Pompilius the Romans were now calculating the length of their own year, like the Greeks, by the course of the moon. And so, like the Greeks, they had to provide an intercalary month.³ [9] For, when the Greeks noticed that they had been careless in fixing the number of days in a year at three hundred and fifty-four (since the sun takes three hundred and sixty-five and a quarter days to complete its course through the zodiac, and it was therefore clear that their year was eleven and a quarter days too short) they devised a regular system of intercalation by which they inserted ninety days, arranged in three months of thirty days apiece, in each period of eight years. [10] The Greeks adopted this plan because it was troublesome and difficult to intercalate eleven and a quarter days each year, and they therefore preferred to multiply this number by eight and to insert the ninety days (which represent the product of eleven and a quarter days multiplied by eight) distributed into three

³ Cf. Herodotus 1. 32. See also the note on Herodotus 2. 4 in the commentary by How and Wells.

months, as I have said. These days the Greeks used to call "super-numerary" and the months "intercalary."

[11] The Romans resolved to follow this system too, but they were not successful, since they overlooked the fact that, as I have already reminded you, they had added one day to the Greek reckoning out of respect for the odd number, with the result that over the period of eight years there could be no conformity with the true position either in the number of the intercalated days or in their place in the calendar. [12] However, before the mistake was discovered, they calculated that in each period of eight years ninety days were to be reckoned as supernumerary, in accordance with the example of the Greeks, and they distributed these intercalary days by means of four intercalations, of twenty-two and twenty-three days alternately, every two years. But after every eighth year there was a surplus of eight intercalary days, the product of the single days by which, as we have said, the Roman reckoning of the length of their common year exceeded that of the Greeks. [13] When this error, too, was recognized, it was corrected as follows: in every third period of eight years sixty-six intercalary days were inserted, instead of ninety, to make up for the twenty-four days by which the Roman reckoning had exceeded the Greek in that number of years.

[14] Intercalation was always made in the month of February, as the last month of the year;⁴ and here too the Romans followed the example of the Greeks, who also used to insert the supernumerary days in the last month of their year, as Glaucippus tells us, the author of an account of the sacred rites of the Athenians. But in one respect the Roman practice differed from the Greek, [15] for, whereas the Greeks inserted these days at the end of the last month of the year, the Romans made the intercalation not at the end of February but after the twenty-third day of that month, that is to say, after the celebration of the festival of the Terminalia was over. They made the five remaining days of February follow the intercalation, in accordance, I take it, with their old religious custom, namely, to ensure that March should in any case come immediately after February. [16] However, it often happened that the market days would fall sometimes on the first day of the year and sometimes on the Nones of a month; and, since either event

⁴ I.e., for the purpose of religious observances (see above 12. 5-7).

was thought to be disastrous for the state, a means to prevent such coincidence was devised, as I shall explain later, after I have shown why the holding of a market on the first Kalends of the year or on the Nones of any month used to be avoided.

[17] Whenever the day with which a year began was a market day, the whole of that year was one of unhappy occurrences and full of sorrow; and the disturbance for which Lepidus was responsible strongly supports this belief.⁵ [18] As for the Nones, it was considered that a meeting of the whole population should be avoided on that day because the Roman people, even after the expulsion of the kings, paid particular honor to the Nones, which they believed to be the birthday of Servius Tullius. For, although the month of his birth was uncertain, it was generally agreed that he was born on the Nones, and noticeably large crowds used therefore to collect every month to celebrate that day; and, since those who had charge of the calendar were afraid that, if the whole population assembled for market on those days, regret for the monarchy might lead to an attempt at revolution, they took care that the Nones and market days should not coincide. [19] Hence it came about that the disposal of that extra day, which, as I have said, was added to the year, was left to the discretion of the superintendents of the calendar to insert it where they would, the only proviso being that the day should be placed in the middle [*sic*] of the festival of the Terminalia, or of an intercalary month, in such a way as to ensure that a market day with its crowds should not fall on a day which was regarded with mistrust. And that is why certain of the old authorities have said that the Romans had not only an intercalary month but an intercalary day as well.

[20] Different accounts are given of the beginning of the practice of intercalation. Licinius Macer attributes its origin to Romulus. Antias, in his second Book, maintains that it was the invention of Numa Pompilius and that the reason for it was connected with the celebration of religious rites. Junius says that the practice was begun by King Servius Tullius, who, according to Varro, also instituted the market day. [21] Tuditanus, in the third Book of his *Magistracies*, records that the decemvirs who added two to the Ten Tables of the Law brought a bill relating to it before the people;

⁵ Probably a reference either to the anti-Sullan activity in 77 B.C. or to the proscriptions of 43 B.C.

and Cassius writes that the same authorities were responsible for the practice. Fulvius, however, says that it was the work of the consul Manius Acilius in 562 A.U.C., just before the beginning of the Aetolian War, but Varro traverses this statement with a reference to an ancient law (engraved on a bronze column by the consuls Lucius Pinarius and Furius) to which the intercalary month is ascribed.

Such, then, are the accounts which have been given of the practice of intercalation.

CHAPTER 14

[1] But, nevertheless, religious scruples at times led to the omission of all intercalation. And sometimes indeed the number of days in a year was increased or reduced through the influence of the priests, who deliberately lengthened or shortened the year in the interest of the tax collectors, with the result that a pretence of exactly observing the calendar in fact added to the confusion in it.

[2] Subsequently, however, since there was thus no consistency in the marking of the times and seasons but all was still vague and uncertain, Gaius Caesar introduced a clearly defined arrangement of the calendar, with the help of a clerk named Marcus Flavius, who provided the dictator with a list of the several days so arranged that their order could be easily found and, that order once found, the position of each day would remain constant. [3] Caesar therefore began the new arrangement of the calendar by using up all the days which could still have caused confusion, with the result that the last of the years of uncertainty was prolonged to one of four hundred and forty-three days. Then, copying the Egyptians—the only people who fully understood the principles of astronomy—he endeavored to arrange the year to conform to the duration of the course of the sun, which it takes three hundred and sixty-five days and a quarter to complete. [4] For just as the lunar cycle is the month, since the moon takes rather less than a month to make a circuit of the zodiac, so the solar cycle must be reckoned by the number of days which the sun takes to turn again to that sign of the zodiac from which it began its course. That is why the common year is styled the “turning” year and is held to be the “great” year¹ (since the lunar cycle is thought of as the “short” year), [5]

¹ Cf. Macrobius *Commentary* 2. 11. 6-10; Ammianus Marcellinus 26. 1. 8; Isidore of Seville 5. 36. 3; Bede *De temporum ratione* 36; Cicero *De natura deorum* 2. 20. 51.

and Vergil has combined these two descriptions of the solar year in the line:

Meanwhile the sun completes the turning of the great year.

[*Aeneid* 3. 284]

It is for this reason that Ateius Capito too thinks that the word "year" (*annus*) is to be explained as a circuit of time; namely, because of old *an* used to stand for "around," as, for example, where Cato in his *Origins* writes: "Let the plough be driven around the boundary," using *an* instead of *circum*; or when we say *ambire*² for *circumire*.

[6] Julius Caesar³ therefore added ten days to the old arrangement of the calendar, in order that the year might consist of the three hundred and sixty-five days which the sun takes to pass through the zodiac; and, to allow for the remaining quarter of a day, he ordained that the priest in charge of the months and days should insert one day every fourth year in that month, and in that part of it, in which of old an intercalary month used to be inserted, that is to say, immediately before the last five days of February. This intercalary day he ordered to be called *bissextus* [as doubling the sixth day before the Kalends of March]. [7] The arrangement to distribute the ten additional days to which I have referred was as follows: January, Sextilis, and December received two days each, and April, June, September, and November one each. No addition was made to the month of February, lest changes in connection with the worship of the gods below might result; and March, May, Quintilis, and October remained as they had been of old, because they already had the full complement of thirty-one days apiece. [8] And, since Caesar made no change in these four months, they also have the Nones on the seventh day, as laid down by Numa. But in January, Sextilis, and December, the months to which Caesar added two days apiece, although after his reforms each for the first time had thirty-one days, nevertheless the Nones come on the fifth day and the Kalends that follow return on the nineteenth day after the Ides, because Caesar would not insert the additional days before either the Nones or the Ides for fear that an unprecedented postponement by two days (which would be the result of such

² Cf. Festus, p. 4: *am praepositio loquularis significat circum.*

³ Bede *De temporum ratione* 12. 89.

change) might interfere with religious ceremonies appointed to be held on a day fixed in relation to the Nones or Ides. [9] Nor yet would he insert the additional days immediately after the Ides for fear of disturbing appointed rest days, but a place was not made for them in any month until the celebration of the rest days held in that month had been completed. Thus in January the allotted days to which we refer were the fourth and third days before the Kalends of February; in April, the sixth day before the Kalends of May; in June, the third day before the Kalends of July; in August, the fourth and third day before the Kalends of September; in September, the third day before the Kalends of October; in November, the third day before the Kalends of December; and in December, the fourth and third days before the Kalends of January. [10] Consequently, although, before this reform, in all the months to which days were added the Kalends of the following months returned on the seventeenth day after the Ides; afterward, as the result of the additions, the Kalends returned on the nineteenth day after the Ides in the months which received two days and on the eighteenth in the months which received one. [11] In each month, however, rest days kept their appointed places. For example, if the third day after the Ides was generally observed as a festival or a rest day and used formerly to be known as the sixteenth day before the following Kalends, even after the number of days in the month had been increased, the religious observance remained unchanged and the ceremony was still held on the third day after the Ides, although (in consequence of an increase in the number of days in the month) the day was no longer the sixteenth day before the following Kalends but the seventeenth, if one day had been added to the month, and the eighteenth, if two days had been added. [12] That is why Caesar inserted the new days, in each case, toward the end of the month, at a time when all the rest days in the month were found to be over. Moreover, he caused these additional days to be marked in the calendar as *fasti*, so as to make more time available for legal business; and he not only arranged that all these days should be such days of legal business but also that none should be a day on which an assembly might be held, his intention being that this increase in the number of the days should not add to a magistrate's power to exercise undue influence.

[13] Caesar's regulation of the civil year to accord with this

revised⁴ measurement was proclaimed publicly by edict, and the arrangement might have continued to stand had not the correction itself of the calendar led the priests to introduce a new error of their own; for they proceeded to insert the intercalary day, which represented the four quarter-days, at the beginning of each fourth year instead of at its end, although the intercalation ought to have been made at the end of each fourth year and before the beginning of the fifth.⁵ [14] This error continued for thirty-six years, by which time twelve intercalary days had been inserted instead of the number actually due, namely, nine. But, when this error was at length recognized, it too was corrected, by an order of Augustus that twelve years should be allowed to pass without an intercalary day, since a sequence of twelve such years would account for those three days too many which, in the course of the thirty-six years, had been introduced by the premature action of the priests. [15] After that, one intercalary day, as ordered by Caesar, was to be inserted at the beginning of every fifth year,⁶ and the whole of this arrangement of the calendar was to be engraved on a bronze tablet, to ensure that it should always be observed.

⁴ Reading *annum... habitis ad limam dimensionibus constitutum... publicavit; et huc usque stare potuisset...*

⁵ I.e., the priests were intercalating every three years instead of every four (by our non-inclusive reckoning).

⁶ I.e., after every four years.

CHAPTER 15¹

[1] This insertion of an intercalary day at the beginning of every fifth year, said Horus, agrees with the practice which obtains in Egypt, the mother of the arts. But there the arrangement of the months seems to present no difficulty: all the months have thirty days each, and at the end of the twelve months (that is to say, after three hundred and sixty days) the remaining five days of a year are then duly inserted between August and September, with an addition at the end of every fourth year of the intercalary day which represents the four quarter-days. [2] At Rome, however, there is no unbroken arithmetical progress straight through the month from its first day to its last; but after the Kalends you proceed to the Nones; then, I gather, you turn aside to what you call the Ides; and again after that—unless I am mistaken, and indeed it is what you have just said yourself—to the Kalends of the following month. [3] I should certainly be glad to know what all this means. And what is more, I cannot even hope to reach an understanding of the terms which you apply to the several days, when you call some of them *fasti* [business days] and others by various different names. I confess too that I do not know the meaning of your “market days,” which you say are so exactly and cautiously observed. Nor do I see any reason to be ashamed of my ignorance, for I am a foreigner, and even a citizen of Rome would feel it no shame to be taught by you, Praetextatus.

[4] My dear Horus, replied Praetextatus, to my mind neither you, as an Egyptian, nor even we Romans need blush to ask questions which all our predecessors thought to be well worth asking. For the Kalends, the Nones, and the Ides, and the many different rest days we keep, are matters which have occupied the attention

¹ Cf. Isidore of Seville 5. 33; Bede *De temporum ratione* 12 and 13.

of countless authorities, and I propose therefore to sum up briefly what all of them have said in this connection.

[5] When Romulus was organizing his kingdom with an understanding keen indeed but untrained, he reckoned the beginning of each month from the day on which the new moon had chanced to appear. [6] Now the new moon does not always appear regularly on the same day of the month, but for definite reasons its reappearance sometimes comes more slowly and sometimes more quickly. Consequently, the preceding month had a greater number of days assigned to it when the moon reappeared more slowly and a smaller number of days when it reappeared more quickly; and it was chance that first decided the number of days which each month was to continue to have. That is how some months came to have thirty-one days and others twenty-nine. [7] Nevertheless it was resolved that in every month the Ides should be reckoned the ninth day after [and including] the Nones, and it was arranged that there should be a period of sixteen days between the Ides and the Kalends of the following month. That is why in the fuller month those two additional days fell between the Kalends of the month and its Nones, so that in some months the Nones were on the fifth day after the Kalends and in others on the seventh. [8] But Caesar, as I have already remarked, in order to safeguard dates which had been fixed for the performance of sacred rites, refused to change the arrangement of the Nones even in the months to which he added two days apiece; for his regard for religious observances led him to insert those days of his after all the rest days in the month had been held.

[9] In early times, then, before the clerk Gnaeus Flavius (against the wishes of the Senate) had published a calendar there used to be assigned to a minor priest the duty of watching for the first appearance of the new moon and reporting its appearance to the high priest. [10] The two priests then offered a sacrifice, and afterward the minor priest, having called (*calata*)—that is, summoned—the common people to the Capitol at the ward Calabra (which is near the Cottage of Romulus), publicly proclaimed the number of days which would elapse between the Kalends and the Nones, making his proclamation by repeating the word *καλῶ* five times if the Nones fell on the fifth day of the month, and seven times if they fell on the seventh day. [11] Now *καλῶ* is a Greek word

meaning "I call," and so it was decided that the first of the days thus "called" should be named the "Kalends." For this reason too the ward at which the proclamation was made was given the name "Calabra," and a similar name [*Calata*] was given to the assembly, because all the people were "called" to it.

[12] The minor priest proclaimed aloud the number of days which would elapse before the Nones because, after the new moon, the country people had to assemble in Rome on the Nones, to hear from the high priest the reasons for the rest days to be held, and to learn what sacrifices had to be offered during that month. [13] Some hold that the Nones are so called as marking the beginning of a new (*novae*) reckoning; or else because the period from the Nones to the Ides is always reckoned [inclusively] as nine (*novem*) days, just as it was the custom among the Etruscans to have several "Nones," since these people used to pay their respects to the king and to transact their private business every ninth day.

[14] Moreover, as for the name "Ides," it is borrowed from the Etruscans, who call the day "Itis," meaning by the word "Pledge of Jupiter." For since we take Jupiter to be the author of light—and that is why the Salii in their chants sing of him as "Bringer of Light" (Lucetius) and the Cretans call him "The Day" (Δία) —the Romans also address him as "Father of the Day" (Diespiter). [15] And that day is rightly called "Pledge of Jupiter" on which the light does not end with the setting of the sun but even through the night moonlight prolongs the brightness of the day, for the Ides always fall at the time of the full moon, that is to say, in the middle of the month. To the day therefore in which there is no darkness even at night men have given the Etruscan name of "Pledge of Jupiter"; and that is why ancient usage has ordained that all the Ides are to be kept as rest days sacred to Jupiter.

[16] Others think that the Ides were called *Vidus*, from *videndo* [seeing], because the full moon is seen on that day; and that the letter "v" was afterward dropped, just as by a contrary operation we have added a "v" to the Greek word for "to see," ἰδεῖν, and say *videre*. Again, some believe that the word "Ides" comes from the Greek word εἶδος, "form," because the shape of the moon is fully shown on that day; and there are those who hold that the day is called after the "sheep of the Ides" (*idulis*), a name of Etruscan origin and given to the sheep which is sacrificed to Jupiter by a

priest on the Ides of every month. [17] In our opinion, however, a truer explanation of the name is that we call the day which "divides" the month the "Ides"; for in the Etruscan language *idua* means "to divide"; so that the word for "widow" (*vidua*) would seem either to be an emphatic form of *idua*, that is to say, "utterly divided"² or else to mean "divided from a husband" (*vir*).

[18] As all the Ides are assigned to Jupiter, so all the Kalends are Juno's. We have this on the authority of both Varro and the priests. And, moreover, the Laurentines keep up this tradition in their ancestral observances, for from their ritual they have given the goddess a distinctive epithet, speaking of her as "Juno of the Kalends," and, further, they make prayer to this goddess on the Kalends of every month from March to December. [19] At Rome too, on all the Kalends, in addition to the offering made to Juno by the minor priest in the ward Calabra, the high priestess also (that is to say, the wife of the high priest) sacrifices a sow or a female lamb to Juno in the Royal Palace. And it is from this goddess that Janus derives the style Junonius, to which we have referred,³ for it appears that just as all places of entry are regarded as belonging to him so all the Kalends are assigned to Juno. [20] Indeed, since it was the custom of our ancestors to begin the month with the first appearance of the moon, they rightly assigned the Kalends to Juno, for they identified her with the moon. Or else the explanation is to be found in the fact that the moon travels through the air (and this is why the Greeks called the moon Artemis, that is to say, ἄρτεμις, because she "cleaves the air"), and Juno is the ruler of the air, so that the beginning of a month, the Kalends, was properly dedicated to her.

[21] I must not omit to mention that our ancestors held that marriages should not be joined on the Kalends, Nones, and Ides, since these days are under a religious ban and must therefore be avoided. With the exception of the Nones the days are in fact rest days, and atonement must be made for an act of violence done to anyone on such days. It would seem that in marriage an act of violence is done to a virgin, and the celebration of a marriage on a rest day is therefore eschewed. Varro indeed relates that Verrius Flaccus, a high authority on pontifical law, used to say that, since

² For such use of an intensifying particle *ve-* see 6. 8. 18, below.

³ 1. 9. 15.

one might scour an old ditch on a rest day but might not dig a new one, it was more fitting for a widow than for a maid to be married on a rest day. [22] But some one will suggest: "If the day of the Nones is not a rest day, why is the celebration of a marriage on it prohibited?" Here too the explanation is clear. For on the first day of a marriage the bride is in retirement, but on the next day she must begin to assume authority in her husband's house and offer sacrifice. However, the day after Kalends, Nones, or Ides is, in each case, a day of ill omen;⁴ and so the day of the Nones was said to be a day unsuitable for marriages, in order that a bride might not enter on her privileges as a wife on the morrow of it, nor offer sacrifice on a day of ill omen—a day on which the divine law forbids the performance of a religious act.

⁴ *Dies ater*; cf. Ovid *Fasti* I. 58, Varro *De Lingua Latina* 6. 29, Aulus Gellius 5. 17; see also I. 16. 21 below.

CHAPTER 16

[1] The sequence of our discourse [continued Praetextatus] has led us to mention certain specific days; and, since this too was a point raised by our friend Horus in the question which he put, a few words must be said about it.

[2] Numa, having divided the year into months, went on to divide each month into days, all of which were known as "festivals" or "working days" or "half-festivals." The festivals are days dedicated to the gods; on the working days men may transact their private and public business; and the half-festivals are days shared between gods and men. [3] Thus on the festivals there are sacrifices and banquets in honor of the gods, public games and "rest days." The working days include "court days," "assembly days," "adjournment days," "appointed days," and "battle days." The half-festivals are not divided into other classes, but each is subdivided in such a way that at certain hours of the day judgment may be pronounced in a court of law and at certain other hours it may not; for when the victim is being slain no legal business may be done, but in the interval between the slaying of the victim and the placing of the offering on the altar such business may be done, although it is again forbidden when the offering is being burned. We must therefore speak at greater length of the division of days into festivals and working days.

[4] The celebration of a religious festival consists of the offering of sacrifices to the gods or the marking of the day by a ritual banquet or the holding of public games in honor of a god or the observance of rest days. [5] Public rest days are of four kinds: they are either "fixed," "movable," "extraordinary," or "market days." [6] In the fixed rest days all the people share; they are held on set and appointed days in set and appointed months; they are noted in

the Calendar, and the observances are defined. Of such rest days the chief examples are the Agonalia, the Carmentalia, and the Lupercalia. Movable rest days are those which are proclaimed yearly by the magistrates or the priests, to be held on days which may or may not be set days, such as, for example, the *Feriae Latinae*, the *Feriae Sementivae*, the *Paganalia*, and the *Compitalia*. Extraordinary rest days are those which are promulgated by the consuls or the praetors by virtue of their discretionary powers. Market days are the concern of the villagers and country folk, who assemble on these days to attend to their private affairs and to market their wares.

[7] Besides the public rest days there are those which belong exclusively to certain families, for example, to the Claudian, Aemilian, Julian, or Cornelian families, and any rest day peculiar to a family which that family observes in accordance with its own domestic practice. [8] Rest days are kept also by individuals, for example, on the occasion of a birthday, the fall of a thunderbolt, a funeral, or an act of atonement. Moreover, it was the custom of old that anyone who had mentioned by name the deities *Salus*, *Semonia*, *Seia*, *Segetia*, or *Tutilina* used to observe the day as a rest day. And, in the same way, whenever the wife of a flamen heard thunder, she kept a rest day until such time as she had appeased the gods.

[9] The priests used to maintain that a rest day was desecrated if, after it had been duly promulgated and proclaimed, any work was done on it. Furthermore, the high priest and the flamens might not see work in progress on a rest day, and for this reason they would give public warning by a herald that nothing of the sort should be done. Neglect of this command was punished by a fine, [10] and it was said that one who had inadvertently done any work on such days had, in addition to the fine, to make atonement by the sacrifice of a pig. For work done intentionally no atonement could be made, according to the pontiff *Scaevola*; but *Umbro* says that to have done work that concerns the gods or is connected with a religious ceremony, or any work of urgent and vital importance does not defile the doer. [11] *Scaevola*, in fact, when asked what might be done on a rest day replied that anything might be done which it would be harmful to have left undone. And so a head of a household who, on a rest day, collected his laborers and freed an

ox from a pit into which it had fallen was not thought to have desecrated the day; nor was a man who propped up a broken roof beam to save it from a threatening collapse. [12] And that is why Vergil, who is an authority in every branch of learning, knowing that sheep are washed either to clean the wool or to cure mange, declared that a sheep might be dipped on a rest day, if the intention was to effect some cure, as appears from the line:

To dip the bleating flock into the health-giving stream¹

[*Georgics* 1. 272]

for the use of the adjective "health-giving" makes it clear that the action is permissible only if its aim is to prevent disease and if there is no ulterior motive of cleaning the wool to make a profit.

[13] So much then for the festivals and the days connected with them, which are, I should add, called *nefasti*. We shall now speak of the working days and those which they comprise, namely, the days known as "court days," "assembly days," "adjournment days," "appointed days," and "battle days."

[14] Court days, or "days of utterance" (*fasti*), are the days on which the praetor may pronounce the three prescribed formulas: "I grant, I pronounce, I adjudge";² and opposed to these days are the days on which these words may not be uttered (*nefasti*). Assembly days are the days on which a motion may be brought before the people in assembly. And, although on court days it is possible to plead in court but not possible to bring a motion before the people, on assembly days each process is permissible. Adjournment days are those on which it is permitted to order recognizances to be given for reappearance in court. Appointed days are those which are fixed for the hearing of an action with a foreigner, as Plautus has it in his *Curculio* [1. 1. 5]:

Even if it were³ a day appointed and agreed for appearance in court against a foreigner.

(In this passage the foreigner is called *hostis*, according to the old usage.)

[15] As for battle days, I shall not treat of them as distinct from

¹ Cf. 1. 7. 8 and 3. 10-12.

² *Do bonorum possessionem; dico ius; addico id de quo ambigitur.*

³ Macrobius reads *intercessit*: the received text has *intercedit*. Cf. Aulus Gellius 16. 4. 4.

the "law days,"⁴ namely, the thirty consecutive days during which, after orders to the army to muster, a red flag is placed on the citadel, all battle days, however, being days on which it is lawful to seek restitution of property or to attack an enemy.

[16] Now when the Latiar, that is, the celebration of the Latin Festival, is proclaimed, and during the days of the Saturnalia, and also when the entrance to the underworld is open,⁵ religion forbids the joining of battle, [17] and for the following reasons: during the Latin Festival, because it was unfitting to begin a war at the time at which a truce was publicly concluded of old between the Roman people and the Latins; during the festival of Saturn, because his reign is believed to have been free from any tumult of war; and when the entrance to the underworld is open, this being a sacred occasion dedicated to Father Dis and Proserpine, and men deemed it better to go out to battle when the jaws of Pluto are shut. [18] And that is why Varro writes: "When the entrance to the underworld is open, it is as if the door of the grim, infernal deities were open. A religious ban therefore forbids us not only to engage in battle but to levy troops and march to war, to weigh anchor, and to marry a wife for the raising of children." [19] As regards the levying of troops, this was also avoided of old on days marked by association with some disaster. It was avoided too on rest days, for as Varro writes in his work on *Augurs*: "Men may not be levied for the army on a rest day; if such a call-up has been made, an act of expiation is necessary." [20] Nevertheless, one must bear in mind that it was only if the Romans were themselves declaring war that they recognized the need to choose a permissible day of battle; when they were being attacked, the nature of the day did not debar them from defending themselves and the honor of Rome. For what room is there for regarding a religious observance, if one has no choice in the matter?

[21] The days after the Kalends, Nones, and Ides were regarded by our ancestors as days to be avoided for any undertaking; and they would seem to have shown their condemnation of those days by giving them the ill-omened style of "black" days, although some people, as though to modify such expression of disapproval, have called the days "common" days [as being unlucky for all alike].

⁴ *Iusti*; cf. Aulus Gellius 20. 1. 43.

⁵ *Mundus patet*; see Fowler, *Essays*, p. 24.

The reason for this belief is given by Gellius⁶ in the fifteenth Book of his *Annals* and by Cassius Hemina in the second Book of his *Histories*.

[22] In 363 A.U.C. the military tribunes Virginius, Manlius, Aemilius, Postumius, and their colleagues discussed in the Senate the reason for the many disasters which had befallen the state within the space of a few years; and by order of the senators the soothsayer Lucius Aquinius was summoned to the House to be questioned on matters relating to religious observances. [23] He replied that a military tribune, Quintus Sulpicius, when about to attack the Gauls at the Allia, had offered sacrifice, for success in battle, on the morrow of the Ides of Quintilis.⁷ At the Cremera too, he said, and on many other occasions and in many other places, defeat in battle had followed the offering of a sacrifice on the morrow of such a day of observance. [24] Whereupon the Senate ordered the question of these religious observances to be referred to the college of pontiffs, who declared that the morrow of all Kalends, Nones, and Ides were to be regarded as "black" days; so that these days were neither days on which battle might be offered, nor days free from religious restrictions,⁸ nor days on which assemblies of the people might be held.

[25] It is also said, by the pontiff Fabius Maximus Servilianus, in his twelfth Book, that a sacrifice in honor of a deceased relative ought not to be offered on a "black" day, because in such sacrifices prayer must also be made first to Janus and Jupiter, and on such a day the names of these gods should not be uttered.

[26] The fourth day before the Kalends, Nones, or Ides is also as a rule avoided as a day of ill omen, and the question is often asked whether there is any religious tradition to account for this practice. But the only written authority that we have found on the point is a statement by Quintus Claudius, in the fifth Book of his *Annals*, that the overwhelming disaster of the battle of Cannae occurred on the fourth day before the Nones of Sextilis. [27] Varro, however, remarks that in military matters it is of no consequence at all whether a day be *fastus* or *nefastus* but that this distinction is concerned only with the acts of private persons.

[28] I have said that market days are rest days, but the statement

⁶ Gnaeus Gellius. See note to I. 8. 1.

⁷ Aulus Gellius 5. 17; cf. Livy 6. 1. ⁸ *Puri*.

may be disputed on the following grounds. Titus, writing of rest days, did not count market days among them, but called market days only "customary"⁹ days. Again, Julius Modestus declares that, when the augur Messala asked the pontiffs whether the Roman market days and Nones were to be included among the rest days, they replied that in their opinion market days were not rest days. And Trebatius too, in the first Book of his *Religious Observances*, says that on a market day a magistrate is empowered to manumit a slave and to grant leave to bring an action at law. [29] On the other hand, however, Julius Caesar, in the sixteenth Book of his treatise on *Auspices*, says that a public meeting cannot be convened—that is, a matter cannot be referred to the people—on a market day, and so an assembly of the Roman people cannot be held on these days. Cornelius Labeo too, in the first Book of his *Calendar*, declares that market days are rest days.

[30] A careful reader will find the explanation of this difference of opinion in the works of Granius Licinianus, in his second Book, where he says that market days are rest days sacred to Jupiter, since it is the custom for the wife of the flamen [of Jupiter] to sacrifice a ram to that god in the Royal Palace on every market day, but that the Hortensian Law made market days court days, in order that the country people, who used to come to Rome to market, might have an opportunity to settle their legal disputes; for the praetor might not pronounce the prescribed words on a day which was *nefastus*. [31] Those then who say that market days are rest days have the ancient usage to protect them from a charge of inexactitude, but the opinion expressed by those who hold the opposite view is also true, if they are taking into account only the time that has elapsed since the passing of the law to which I have referred.

[32] The first establishment of the market day is attributed to Romulus, who, it is said, after sharing his royal power with Titus Tatius and after instituting certain sacrifices and associations, also prescribed the observance of those days. And this is what Tuditanus maintains; [33] but Cassius [Hemina] says that they were a device of Servius Tullius, designed to enable country folk to meet in Rome and arrange matters that concerned both town and country. Geminus says that it was after the expulsion of the kings that a market

⁹ *Sollennes*.

day was first held, because most of the common people in memory of the late Servius Tullius used to offer sacrifice in his honor on those days; and Varro too agrees with this account. [34] However, according to Rutilius, the Romans instituted market days in order that the country people, after working for eight [*recte* seven] days in the fields, should leave their work there on the ninth [*recte* eighth] day and come to Rome to sell their wares and to get information about the laws; and also that there might be a larger concourse of the people to hear the popular and senatorial decrees which might be brought before them, for matters published for a period of three market days¹⁰ would readily come to the knowledge of one and all. [35] That too was the origin of the custom of promulgating a law for a period of three market days, and also of the practice by which candidates for office used to come to the assembly of the people on a market day and take their stand on raised ground, that they might be seen clearly by everyone present. But all these usages fell more and more into neglect and eventually disappeared, when with the growth in numbers of the people the assemblies were well attended even in the period between two market days.¹¹

[36] There is also a Roman goddess called Nundina, and she takes her name from the ninth day after the birth of a child. This day is called "the day of purification," because on it an infant is purified and given a name: the day being for boys the ninth day after birth and for girls the eighth.¹²

[37] I have now given, I think, a full account of the arrangement of the year and the months, and in this explanation our friend Horus has the answer to his question about the names of the days and the observances connected with them. He is a man of keen intelligence, our friend from the Nile, and belongs to a people who are masters of the science of numbers. And so for my part I should

¹⁰ *Trinundino die*: this would be a period of seventeen days, the first, ninth, and seventeenth being *nundinae*. But it is arguable that *trinundino die* means after a period of three weeks, i.e., twenty-four days (see note to *Epistulae ad Familiares* 16. 12. 3 in How's edition of Cicero's letters).

¹¹ *Internundinum*: a period of eight days, the eighth (reckoned from the last *nundina*) being the market day. The days were marked in the calendar by the letters A to H.

¹² *Dies lustricus*. See Festus, p. 107: *lustrici dies infantium appellantur, puellarum octavus puerorum nonus, quia his lustrantur atque eis nomina imponuntur*.

like to know if he finds anything in our Roman order and arrangement to provoke a smile, or if he would agree that the Etruscan Tiber too has drawn something from the learning of his native land.

[38] No one, interposed Eustathius, and certainly not Horus, who is a man of dignity and distinction—no one, in my opinion, could be so inept a judge as to fail to commend the arrangement of the Roman year, which has been corrected, as the saying is, to the fineness of a close-cut fingernail; and indeed one's regard for that arrangement has been enhanced by the retentive memory and eloquent words of its exponent. Nor is it a matter for surprise that our system has escaped the tooth of censure, since Egypt was the authority for its latest reform. [39] For it was from Egyptian science that Julius Caesar drew his knowledge of the movements of the stars, a subject on which he has left some learned books; and it was from the Egyptian practice too that he borrowed the idea of increasing the length of the year to correspond to the complete course of the sun. [40] The old inhabitants of Latium, having no communication with Egypt, could not in their time learn anything from that country, and they therefore followed the custom of the Greeks in reckoning the days of the month, counting the days backward—the numeration beginning with a higher number and decreasing, to end at last with a lower number; [41] for we speak of the tenth day, then of the ninth, after that of the eighth day, and so on, just as the Athenians used to speak of the tenth day and the ninth day of the waning month. [42] Homer too, when he says:

As one month wanes and the next begins

[*Odyssey* 14. 162; 19. 307]

means by "waning" that division of a month which, in the reckoning of its days, gradually wanes and ends with the name of the month that is to follow, and by "beginning" the first numerical division of that following month which will succeed the waning portion of its predecessor. [43] And so it is that your Roman Homer, the poet of Mantua, knowing that an end to which one moves may be said to stand fixed, writes:

For each man his appointed day stands fixed [*Aeneid* 10. 467] meaning that a man's last day stands fixed, as the day to which, after passing through all the rest, he is at length to come. [44] The same poet, renowned as much for his sense of reverence as for his learning, aware that the Romans of old ordered the arrangement

of the year by the course of the moon and their successors by the course of the sun, showed his respect for the view of each age in the lines:

You, who guide the passage of the gliding year through the
heavens, Liber and kindly Ceres [Georgics 1. 5]
for by this invocation he points to both the moon and the sun as the
guides of the year.

CHAPTER 17

[1] Hereupon Avienus, addressing Vettius Praetextatus, said: I have asked myself earnestly and often how it is that we worship the sun sometimes as Apollo, sometimes as Liber, and at other times under a number of other different styles. And since, by the will of Heaven, you are the leading authority on all matters that have to do with religion, I beg you to go on and explain to me why one name should cover such a variety of other names.

[2] You must bear in mind, replied Vettius, that the company of poets in their stories about the gods usually borrow the elements of these stories from the secret places of philosophy; certainly it is not empty superstition but divine reason that makes them relate almost all the gods—at any rate the celestial gods—to the sun. [3] For if the sun, as men of old believed, “guides and directs the rest of the heavenly lights”¹ and alone presides over the planets in their courses, and if the movements of the planets themselves have power, as some think, to determine or (as it is agreed that Plotinus held) to foretell the sequence of human destinies, then we have to admit that the sun, as directing the powers that direct our affairs, is the author of all that goes on around us.

[4] And just as Vergil’s words “What divine power had been offended?”² although spoken of Juno alone, show that the various activities of a single deity are to be regarded as equivalent to as many various divinities, so the diverse powers of the sun have given names to as many gods. And this is the origin of the maxim proclaimed by the leading philosophers: that the Whole is One.

[5] To that power of the sun, then, which presides over prophecy and healing men have given the name Apollo; and that power

¹ Cicero, *De re publica* 6. 17. ² *Aeneid* 1. 8.

from which comes speech has received the name Mercury; and, since speech is the expression of inward thoughts, this god is appropriately called Hermes, from the Greek word ἑρμηνεύειν, to put into words. [6] Again, there is a power of the sun which has charge over the fruits of the orchard and an activity too with charge over the fruits of the field.

Such is the origin of the names of the rest of the gods who are associated with the sun on a principle which is certain but mysterious. And since so great a mystery should be supported by something more than a bare statement, let us consult the old authorities for each of these names.

[7] Many explanations have been given which associate the name of Apollo with the sun, and I shall proceed to discuss them in turn. Thus Plato³ writes that the sun is called Apollo because he hurls forth (ἀποπάλλειν) his rays. Chrysippus says that the first letter of the name has a negative force⁴ and that he is called Apollo as *not* being one of the many (πολλῶν) paltry properties of fire; or because he is one and *not* many (πολλοί); for in Latin too the sun is called *sol* because he alone (*solus*) possesses such brilliance. [8] Speusippus finds the explanation of the name Apollo in the fact that the power of the sun is the product of many (ἀπὸ πολλῶν) fires; Cleanthes in the fact that the sun rises in different (ἀπ' ἄλλων) places in the sky at different times. [9] And Cornificius thinks that the sun gets the name Apollo because he reruns his course through the heavens (ἀναπολεῖν), that is to say, because after passing in his rapid course through the compass of the heavens—by the Greeks called πῶλος—he returns to the place of his rising.

Others hold that the sun is called Apollo as destructive (ἀπολλύντα) of life; for it kills and destroys living creatures when it sends a pestilence among them in time of immoderate heat, [10] as Euripides says, in his *Phaethon*:⁵

O Sun, of the golden light, how hast thou destroyed me;
wherefore man's meaning is clear when he calls thee Apollo
and Archilochus likewise, in the lines:

³ But see Plato *Cratylus* 405-6.

⁴ I.e., alpha privative.

⁵ Fragment 781. 11 (Nauck).

Lord Apollo, do thou also make known the guilty and destroy them, as thou dost with thy destroying power.⁶

[11] And then, men consumed by a fever are said to be "smitten by Apollo" and "smitten by the sun"; and, since the moon's effects are similar to those of the sun, both to help and to harm, women suffering from certain diseases are described as "smitten by the moon" and "smitten by Artemis." [12] This is why statues of Apollo are equipped with a bow and arrows, the arrows being understood to represent the force of the sun's rays—as Homer says, of Apollo:

But then he launched his sharp arrow at the men, and smote.

[*Iliad* 1. 51]

[13] The sun also gives saving health to all, for its kindly warmth is believed to bring health to everything that has breath. But since it is constantly a source of health and sends pestilence more rarely, statues of Apollo represent the god with the Graces in his right hand and a bow and arrows in his left, because his hand is slower to harm and swifter to save. [14] Power to heal is attributed to Apollo because the heat of the sun, if it is temperate, puts to flight all diseases; for he is thought to be so named as the god who drives away (*ἀπελαύνοντα*) diseases, as if the name were "Apello." [15] And this interpretation has made the Greek form of the name agree with a Latin form of it [Apello]; so that we did not need to change the name of the god, but you may understand Apollo to be the god who drives away (*apellentem*) ills—the god whom at Athens men call "the Warder-off of Ills." Moreover, at Lindus the god is worshiped as Apollo "the God of Pestilence," a name which was given to him for putting an end to a pestilence; and our own ritual preserves the same belief in the association of the god with health and healing, for the Vestal Virgins call upon him as "Apollo *Medicus*" and "Apollo *Paeon*."

[16] Since, then, the chief activities of this star, the sun, are two—it being, on the one hand, helpful to mortal life when its heat is temperate, but, on the other hand, sometimes sending a deadly pestilence by its darting rays—men use two names to mark at the

⁶ Edmonds, *Elegy and Iambus*, II, 110.

same time, each by its particular form, each of these two activities; for they call the god Ἴήιος and Παιάν. And these names fit each activity, for in the one context Ἴήιος is derived from ἰᾶσθαι, to heal, and Παιάν from παύειν, to make to cease (that is, to make distress to cease); but in the other context the style Ἴήιος is derived from ἰέναι, to launch, (as in Homer's phrase, "launching his sharp arrow") and Παιάν from παίειν, to smite. [17] Indeed it is customary in a prayer for health to pronounce the words ἰῆ (with an *eta*) Παιάν, meaning "Heal, O God of Healing"; but to say ἱε (with an *epsilon* and with a rough breathing on the first letter) Παιάν, when invoking a curse on a person, the words then being equivalent to "Launch thine arrow and smite." These latter words are the words which Latona is said to have used when she was exhorting Apollo to assail the attacking Python with arrows⁷ (the physicists' explanation of this story shall be given in its proper place); [18] and it is said that the Delphic oracle sanctioned this expression, ἱε Παιάν, when the Athenians were seeking the aid of the god against the Amazons in the reign of Theseus; for, as they were about to enter upon the war, the god bade them call on him with these very words and exhort him to be himself their helper.

[19] Apollodorus, writing in the fourteenth Book of his treatise *On the Gods*, calls the sun Ἴήιος and says that Apollo gets this name from the sun's moving (ἰεσθαι) and going (ἰέναι) rapidly through its circuit; [20] but Timotheus says:⁸

O Sun, thou who dost strike the eternal vault of heaven with thy bright rays, send against the enemy a far-darting arrow from thy bowstring. O send forth thine arrow, thou that dost smite.

[21] The same god, as having charge over all that brings health, is called "Source of Healing" (Οὔλιος); in the words of Homer:

Health (οὔλε) and joy be thine.⁹ [*Odyssey* 24. 402]

Leandrius too writes that the Milesians offer sacrifice for their health and safety to Apollo Οὔλιος; and Pherecydes relates that Theseus, on his way to Crete to face the Minotaur, made a vow to

⁷ Cf. Athenaeus 15. 701d.

⁸ Edmonds, *Lyra Graeca*, III, 306.

⁹ Οὔλιος normally means "baneful," and Macrobius might have referred here also to the contradictory functions of Apollo.

Apollo Οὔλιος and to Artemis Οὔλια for his safe return.

[22] It is not surprising that men pay honor to the god's twofold activities under different names, for we find other gods, too, with double powers and double names, contrary in meaning but relating to the same object. Neptune, for example, is sometimes called the Earth Shaker and at other times the Stablisser [of the Earth]; and Mercury likewise both awakens and lulls to sleep the minds or eyes of men—in the words of Homer:¹⁰

He took up his wand, wherewith he casts a spell on the eyes of men, [of whomsoever he will; and others again he likewise wakens out of sleep].

[*Iliad* 24. 343]

[23] Thus it is that we worship Apollo, the sun, sometimes under names which signify health and sometimes under names which signify pestilence, although, nevertheless, the pestilence which he sends on the wicked indicates clearly that the god is the defender of the righteous. [24] Hence the remarkable reverence paid to Apollo Libystinus at Pachynus, a cape in Sicily; for when the Libyans had brought their fleet to the cape and were about to invade the island, Apollo (who is worshiped at Pachynus) at the prayer of the inhabitants of the place sent a pestilence on the enemy which suddenly destroyed almost all of them, and so the god received the name of Libystinus. [25] Our own annals also contain a similar example of the very present power of this same god. For when, at the oracular behest of the soothsayer Marcus and the Sibylline oracle, games in honor of Apollo were being celebrated at Rome, the enemy suddenly appeared; whereupon the people rushed to arms and went to meet them, and at that moment a cloud of arrows was seen to fall upon the enemy and put them to flight; so that the Romans returned victorious to the games of the god who had saved them. It is clear from this story that it was a battle and not, as some think, a plague that led to the institution of these games. [26] The reason for this latter opinion is the fact that at the time of these games the sun in our country shines immediately overhead, for the Crab is in the summer tropic, and, while the sun is on its way through this part of the heaven, its bright rays illuminate our temperate zone, not from afar but falling directly downward from above. Some therefore have thought that the pur-

¹⁰ Cf. Vergil *Aeneid* 4. 242.

pose of the Games of Apollo is to appease the god of heat at that particular time. [27] I find, however, in the written authorities that these games were instituted to commemorate a victory and not, as some annalists say, to ensure good health. For the games were first instituted in the Punic War, after consultation of the Sibylline Books and on the advice of Cornelius Rufus, the decemvir, who accordingly received the name of Sibylla, afterward corrupted to Sylla—a name which he was the first to bear.

[28] The story goes that, when two rolls of the oracles of the soothsayer Marcius were brought into the Senate, the following prophecy was found in them: "Romans, if ye would drive from your land the enemy, the plague which comes from peoples afar, I advise that games be vowed to Apollo, to be celebrated joyfully in his honor every year. Over the celebration of these games let the praetor preside who shall have the administration of supreme justice to the People and the Commons. Let ten men offer sacrifice with victims according to the Greek use. If this shall be rightly done by you, ye shall be glad for evermore and the State shall become more prosperous; for this god shall destroy your foes who are eating up your fields undisturbed."¹¹ [29] One day was devoted to religious ceremonies of atonement in accordance with the oracle, and then it was decreed by the Senate that ten men should consult the Sibylline Books with a view to obtaining more information touching the celebration of the Games to Apollo and the right performance of the religious ceremonies. Learning that what had been found in the books confirmed the oracle, the Senators resolved that games should be vowed and celebrated to Apollo and that twelve thousand bronze *asses* and two full-grown victims be given to the praetor for the purpose. The ten men were ordered to offer sacrifice after the Greek use with the following victims: to Apollo, a bull and two white she-goats, all with horns gilded, and to Latona, a cow with horns gilded; and the people were bidden to wear garlands as they watched the games in the Circus. [30] This is the most authentic account of the origin of the Apollinarian Games.

Now let us consider the other names of the god, to show that he is to be identified with the sun.

[31] He is given the name Loxias, because (in the words of Oenopides) he moves obliquely (λοξόν) in his circular course from

¹¹ Livy 25. 12. For the *carmen* see Baehrens, p. 294.

his setting to his rising; or because (as Cleanthes writes) he moves in spirals and these are oblique—that is to say, because his path is winding; or because, since he is to the south of us and we are to the north of him, his rays strike us obliquely.

[32] He is given the name “Delius,” because by the light that he sheds he makes all things clear (δηλα) and visible.

[33] He is called “Phoebus,” according to Cornificius, because of the regularity and force with which he moves (φοιτᾶν βίᾳ). But the general opinion is that this epithet is derived from the clearness and brightness of his appearance.

[34] So too he is called “Phanes,” because he gives light (φαίνειν). And “Phaneos,” that is, “coming new (φαίνεται νέος) to our eyes,” since the sun renews itself each day; and this is why Vergil uses the phrase “when the morning is new.”¹²

[35] The inhabitants of Camirus,¹³ who inhabit an island sacred to the sun, sacrifice to Apollo “the Ever-begotten and Ever-beggetting” (Αειγενέτης), because the sun always comes into being at its rising and is itself the source of all life by its gifts of fertilization, warmth, growth, nourishment, and increase.

[36] There are several explanations of the style “Lycian Apollo.” Antipater the Stoic writes that Apollo has received the name “Lycius” because all things become bright (λευκαίνεσθαι) in the light of the sun. Cleanthes observes that he is so called because with his rays he carries off moisture as wolves (λύκοι) carry off sheep. [37] The Greeks of old called the first light, which precedes sunrise, λύκη from the adjective λευκός [“light” or “bright”]; and today too this time is known as λυκόφως. [38] It is the time to which Homer refers in the line:

When it was not yet dawn, but still the twilight (ἄμφιλύκη) of
night [Iliad 7. 433]

and he also says:

Make thy prayer to Apollo, the Father of Light (Λυκηγενεῖ),
renowed for the bow [Iliad 4. 101]

meaning by the epithet: “to him who begets the light,” that is, “to him who by his rising creates light”; for from the brightness of the

¹² *Georgics* 3. 325.

¹³ Reading *Camirenses* here as in 45 below.

rays, from the brightness which far and wide precedes the approaching sun and gradually dissipates the darkness and shadows, light is born. [39] And here, too, as with very many other words, the Romans seem to have borrowed from the Greek and to have formed their word for light (*lux*) from λύκη.

Again, in very ancient times the Greeks used to call the year "the path of light" (λυκάβας), as measured and passed over (βαίνόμενον) by¹⁴ the light (λύκος), that is to say, by the sun.

[40] From the city of Lycopolis in the Thebaid comes evidence that the sun is also called λύκος, with the meaning "wolf"; for Apollo and the wolf are worshiped there with equal reverence, the object of veneration in each case being the sun, because the wolf, like the sun, carries off and devours everything and commonly overcomes the darkness of the night by the keenness of his vision. [41] There are some too who think that wolves themselves (λύκοι) get their name from λύκη, first light, because that is just the time that these beasts wait for as the best time to carry off the sheep which, after a hungry night, are driven at dawn from their folds to pasture.

[42] Apollo has been called "Father of the People," not as worshiped according to the particular religious usage of a single race or state but as the generating cause of all things, since the sun, by drying up moisture, is the universal cause of generation—in the words of Orpheus:

Having the mind and wise counsel of a father
and it is for this reason that we also call Janus "Father" and worship the sun under that name.

[43] Apollo has been called "the God of Shepherds," not from having served as a shepherd and (as the story goes) from having fed the flocks of King Admetus, but because the sun feeds all that the earth brings forth, [44] so that men sing of him as the feeder not of a single kind of stock but of all kinds. And thus it is that in Homer, for example, Neptune addresses him thus:

Phoebus, thou didst herd kine of shambling gait and crooked
horns [Iliad 21. 448]

and again, in the same poet, the god appears as feeding mares, in the lines:

¹⁴ Reading ὑπό.

Apollo of the silver bow reared them in Peraea, two mares,
bearing terror of battle to the foe. [Iliad 2. 766]

[45] Moreover, there are temples to Apollo, as Feeder of Sheep, at Camirus, with the title, Guardian of Flocks; and at Naxos, with the title, Patron of Shepherds; and he is worshiped also as the God with the Lamb's Fleece. Again, at Lesbos he is worshiped as the God of the Glen; and he has many styles in divers cities, all pointing to his function as a "god who feeds"; so that he is recognized to be the overseer of all flocks and herds and in very truth to feed them.

[46] Apollo "Eleleus"¹⁵ is so called from his wheeling movement (ἐλίσσασθαι) round the earth, since the sun seems, as it were, to roll round the earth in an unending orbit—as Euripides says:

O Sun, wheeling thy flaming chariot with its swift steeds
[Phoenissae 3]

or else because he goes round as a vast mass (συναλισθέντος) of fire—in the words of Empedocles:¹⁶

Since, massed (ἀναλισθεις) into a ball, he travels around the great expanse of heaven.

Plato,¹⁷ also deriving the epithet from the word which means to "mass," or "collect," explains it as indicating that the sun at its rising collects men and gathers them together.

[47] The name "Golden-haired" is given to Apollo on account of the brightness of the sun's rays, which are commonly called its "golden locks"; and for this reason the god is also styled "Unshorn," because the sun's rays can never be severed from the source of the light. He is likewise "God of the Silver Bow," because the sun as it rises has, at the extreme edge of its orb, the shape of a bow, in appearance white as silver, and from this bow the sun's rays flash forth like arrows.

[48] He is called "Smintheus" from the fiery heat with which the sun runs (ζέων θεῖ); "Karneios" because the sun seems to burn and yet to be renewed (καίόμενος: νέος), or because, although all that burns is consumed, the sun glows with his own heat and

¹⁵ This epithet is usually applied to Dionysus and refers to the cries of the Bacchanals. See Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4. 15.

¹⁶ Fragment B 41 (Diels).

¹⁷ *Cratylus* 409a, where Socrates suggests that the derivation of ἥλιος would be clearer if the Doric form, ἄλιος, were used.

yet remains forever new. And likewise he is called Apollo "Killaios" because he moves to the left (κινήσεις λαιᾶς ποιῇ), since for us his course is always from the south.¹⁸

[49] He is Apollo "Thymbraios," the Rain-maker, as the god who sends the rain (ὄμβρους θεός); and Apollo "Philesios," because the light of the rising sun is lovely and we greet it with reverence and love.

[50] As for the epithet "Pythian," as applied to Apollo, in the opinion of the physicists the derivation is not from "inquiry" (πεῦσις)—that is to say, not from the consulting of oracles—but from a word which means "to make rotten" (πύθειν = σήπειν), a process which is always the result of great heat. [51] It is for this reason, then, that they consider that the god is called "Pythian," although Greek mythologists say that the name was given to him after the slaying of the serpent [Python]. Nevertheless the myth is not inconsistent with the true understanding of a secret of nature, as will appear if one runs through the series of events which comprise the tale of the birth of Apollo. And this is what, a short time ago, I promised to do.

[52] When Latona was about to give birth to Apollo and Diana, Juno is said to have sought to hinder her confinement. However, the story goes that, when at length the divine children had been born, a serpent, called Python, attacked their cradle and the infant Apollo killed the monster with arrows. [53] Natural science shows that this myth is to be understood as follows. At first all was chaos; but, afterward, from a confused and amorphous mass there began to emerge into light the shapes of things and the elements. The earth was still moist in substance and tottering on a soft and unstable foundation, but it is believed that, as the heat of the heavens gradually increased in strength and fiery seeds flowed down from it into the earth, these two stars—the sun and the moon—were born, the sun being carried up by a mighty force of heat to the parts above, but the moon (weighed down by a kind of warmth peculiar to its nature, and moister, and as it were of the feminine sex) occupying the parts below—as if the sun consisted of the substance of a father and the moon of the substance of a mother.

¹⁸ I.e., looking westward, and so following the course of the sun.

[54] Now by Latona the physicists understand the earth, and this earth was for long opposed by Juno (to prevent the birth of the deities of which we have spoken)—Juno being, that is to say, the air, which at that time was still moist and heavy and was standing in the way of the heavens to prevent the brightness of the two lights (the sun and the moon) from shining through the dense moist air as though after a process of childbirth. [55] But the perseverance of the divine providence, which is believed to have aided the birth, prevailed; and so, in corroboration of the myth, there is in the island of Delos a temple of Providence, called the temple of Athena "Forethought," and appropriate rites are celebrated in it. [56] Moreover, Apollo and Diana are said to have been born on an island because they seem to us to rise out of the sea; and this island is called Delos because the rising and, as it were, the birth of these two lights make all things clear and visible (δηλα).

[57] The following is the natural explanation of the killing of the serpent, as given in the writings of Antipater the Stoic. Vapor rising from the still moist earth moved rapidly in spirals to the parts above and, after it had become heated, rolled back thence, like a deadly serpent, to the parts below, where it infected all things with the potency of the corruption which only heat and moisture can generate. The density and darkness of the vapor veiled the very sun and seemed as it were to take away its light; but at length the vapor was dissipated, dried up, and destroyed by the divine heat of the sun's rays falling upon it like arrows, and this gave rise to the myth of the killing of a serpent by Apollo.

[58] There is yet another explanation of the destruction of the serpent; for, although the sun's course never leaves the line of the ecliptic, nevertheless by giving to the winds definite changes of direction, now upward and now downward, it imparts to its journey a suggestion of the sinuous movement of a serpent—[59] so that Euripides writes:¹⁹

The fire-born serpent leads the way for the four changing seasons, yoking its car rich in fruit, in a concord of wealth. When, therefore, the sun—thus styled a serpent—had put an end to his course through the sky, it used to be said of him that he had

¹⁹ Fragment 937 (Nauck).

“put an end” to the serpent, and thence arose the myth of the slaying of a serpent.

[60] The reference to the arrows of the sun simply indicates the emission of its rays. These rays are seen to be longest at the time when the sun is putting an end to its yearly course at the summer solstice (it being then at its highest point in the sky and the days at their longest); and so the sun-god is called “Far-darter” as “shooting his rays from afar,” that is to say, continually sending down rays to the earth from the most distant and highest point.

[61] No more need have been said about the epithet “Pythian,” did not the following explanation of the name also present itself to our notice. For, when the sun in the sign of Cancer brings the summer solstice and ends his course which is marked by the longest day (thence to begin a return course toward the shortening days), he is then called “Pythius” as hastening to his end (*πύματον θέων*), that is to say, as “running the last lap.” [62] And the same name is appropriate when the sun, again entering Capricorn, is seen to have completed the course which ends with the shortest day; so that on the completion of his yearly span in either sign Apollo is said to have put an end to the serpent, or, in other words, to have put an end to his serpentine journey. This is the opinion expressed by Cornificius in his *Derivations*. [63] Moreover, of these two signs, Cancer and Capricorn, which are known as the Gates of the Sun, each is so called because, just as the crab is a creature that goes backward and sideways, so on the same principle the sun always begins its sideways, backward path when it is in that sign. And again, just as it appears to be the habit of the goat at pasture always to make for high ground as it feeds,²⁰ so too the sun in Capricorn begins to make its way back from the lowest point in the sky to its height.

[64] Men call Apollo “the Twin God” (*Δίδυμαῖος*)²¹ because he presents a twin form of his own divinity, by himself giving light and shape to the moon, for, as a twofold star giving light from a single source, he illumines the periods of day and night. And this

²⁰ Cf. Manilius 5. 139: (*capellae*) ... *ulterius pascentes tendere gaudent*; Aeschylus *Supplices* 691: *πρόνομα βοτά* and Tucker’s note. Cf. 1. 21. 26 and 1. 22. 6 below.

²¹ Of Didyma (Branchidae)? Cf. 5. 21. 12 for a reference to rites of Zeus at Didyma, and 5. 22. 14 for the connection of Apollo with Zeus.

too is the reason why the Romans worship the sun under the name and form of Janus, with the style of the Didymaeon Apollo.

[65] Apollo is called "Delphian" as making clear things that are invisible (δηλοῦν ἄφαντι), that is, because the brightness of his light makes clear what is dark; or, in the opinion of Numenius, because the god is, as it were, one and alone; for, according to Numenius, δέλφος in the language of ancient Greece meant "a single one," and this, he says, is why the Greek word for a brother is ἀδελφός, as though to say, "one who is no longer a single one."

[66] Furthermore, the inhabitants of Hierapolis, who are Assyrians by race, embody all the activities and powers of the sun in the form of a single, bearded statue which they call Apollo. [67] Its face is represented with a long pointed beard; the statue has a tall basket on its head and it is protected by a breastplate; the right hand holds upright a spear on which is a little figure of Victory; the left hand offers the likeness of a flower; and a gorgon-like cloak with a fringe of serpents hangs from the top of the shoulders and covers the back. By the side of the statue are representations of eagles in flight. Before its feet is an image of a woman, with female figures on her right and left encircled by the sinuous coils of a serpent. [68] The downward-pointing beard represents the rays which shoot from above to the earth. The golden basket rising high above the head denotes the height of heaven, whence the essence of the sun is believed to come. By the evidence of the spear and breastplate a representation of Mars is added, and Mars (as I shall go on to explain) is to be identified with the sun. The figure of Victory bears witness to the universal sovereignty of the sun. The likeness of a flower represents the flowering of all that the god sows and engenders and fosters, nourishes and ripens. [69] The likeness of a woman is a representation of the earth, to which the sun gives light from above; and in like manner the two female figures on each side represent matter and nature, which together serve the earth. The representation of a serpent points to the serpentine course of the sun. The eagles, by the great speed and height of their flight, indicate the great height of the sun. [70] The statute has also a gorgonlike vesture, because Minerva, to whom we know this vesture belongs, is a power of the sun; for we have it on the testimony of Porphyrius that Minerva is

the power of the sun which gives a right judgment to the minds of men, and that is why this goddess is said to have been born from the head of Jupiter, or, in other words, to have issued from the highest part of the heavens, whence the sun derives its origin.

CHAPTER 18

[1] What we have said of Apollo may be taken to apply to Liber also. Certainly Aristotle, writing in his *Inquiries into the Nature of the Divine*, states that Apollo and Liber Pater are one and the same god, and among the many proofs of this statement he says also that the Ligyreans in Thrace have a shrine dedicated to Liber from which oracles are given. In this shrine the soothsayers drink large draughts of wine before delivering their prophecies, just as in the temple of Apollo at Claros water is drunk before the oracles are pronounced.

[2] Moreover, among the Spartans, at the celebration of the rites in honor of Apollo called the Hyacinthia, garlands of ivy are worn, as in the worship of Bacchus. [3] Likewise the Boeotians, although they speak of Mount Parnassus as sacred to Apollo, nevertheless pay honor there both to the Delphic oracle and to the caves of Bacchus as dedicated to a single god, so that both Apollo and Liber Pater are worshiped on the same mountain. [4] This is confirmed by Varro and Granius Flaccus; and this too is what Euripides tells us in the lines:

Dionysus equipped with thyrsus and clad in skins of fawns
leaps dancing down Parnassus among the pines.¹

[5] It is on Mount Parnassus that a festival of Bacchus is held every other year, at which, it is said, many bands of Satyrs are seen and their characteristic voices are frequently heard, and likewise the clashing of cymbals often strikes men's ears. [6] And—that no one may suppose Parnassus to be sacred to two different gods—the following line from the *Licymnius* of Euripides also indicates that Apollo and Liber are one and the same god:²

¹ Fragment 752 (Nauck); Aristophanes *Ranae* 1211.

² Fragment 480 (Nauck).

Lord Bacchus, Lover of the Laurel, Apollo the Healer, making sweet music on the lyre
and Aeschylus writes to the same effect:³

Apollo, the ivy-crowned, the Bacchic god, the Seer.

[7] I first maintained that Apollo is to be identified with the sun, and I afterward explained that Liber Pater is himself Apollo; and so there can be no doubt but that the sun and Liber Pater are to be regarded as manifestations of the same deity. Nevertheless the point shall be established distinctly by yet clearer proofs. [8] In the performance of sacred rites a mysterious rule of religion ordains that the sun shall be called Apollo when it is in the upper hemisphere, that is to say, by day, and be held to be Dionysus, or Liber Pater, when it is in the lower hemisphere, that is to say, at night. [9] Likewise, statues of Liber Pater represent him sometimes as a child and sometimes as a young man; again, as a man with a beard and also as an old man, as for example the statue of the god which the Greeks call Bassareus⁴ and Briseus,⁵ and that which in Campania the Neapolitans worship under the name Hebbon. [10] These differences in age have reference to the sun, for at the winter solstice the sun would seem to be a little child, like that which the Egyptians bring forth from a shrine on an appointed day, since the day is then at its shortest and the god is accordingly shown as a tiny infant.⁶ Afterward, however, as the days go on and lengthen, the sun at the spring equinox acquires strength in a way comparable to growth to adolescence, and so the god is given the appearance of a young man. Subsequently, he is represented in full maturity, with a beard, at the summer solstice, when the sun's growth is completed. After that, the days shorten, as though with the approach of his old age—hence the fourth of the figures by which the god is portrayed.

[11] Again, we learn that in Thrace the sun is identified with Liber, who, as appears from the writings of Alexander, is worshiped there, under the name of Sebadius, with a splendid ritual. And on the hill of Zilmissus a temple has been dedicated to him, round in

³ Fragment 341 (Nauck).

⁴ "Clothed in a fox-skin"; see Horace *Carmina* 1. 18. 11.

⁵ See Persius 1. 76, where the epithet Briseus ("Bacchanalian") is applied to Accius, for the extravagance of his tragic diction.

⁶ See S. Weinstock, "A New Greek Calendar and Festivals of the Sun," *Journal of Roman Studies*, XXXVIII (1948), 42.

shape and with an opening in the middle of the roof. The round shape of the temple represents the appearance of this star, and the admission of light at the top of the roof symbolizes the fact that the sun, by sending in its light from the highest part of the heavens, illumines the whole world and that at its rising all things become visible.

[12] Orpheus too intended the following passage to be understood to refer to the sun:

Melting the divine ether which aforesaid was without motion, he [the Creator] brought up and displayed a most beautiful sight to the Gods; him, whom men now call by the names of Phanes and Dionysus and the lord Eubouleus and Antauges seen afar (for on earth some men give him one name and some another). He was the first to come forth into light, and he was called Dionysus, because he wheels (δινεῖται) throughout the boundless length of Olympus; but with change he took another name, having titles manifold to fit each change according to the seasons of changing time.

[13] Orpheus here has called the sun "Phanes" (φανερός), from its light and enlightening, for the sun sees all and is seen by all. The name Dionysus is derived, as the soothsayer himself says, from the fact that the sun wheels round in an orbit. [14] Cleanthes writes that the name Dionysus is derived from the Greek verb meaning "to complete" (διανύσαι), because the sun in its daily course from its rising to its setting, making the day and the night, completes the circuit of the heavens. [15] For the physicists Dionysus is "the mind of Zeus" (νῦνός νοῦς), since they hold that the sun is the mind of the universe, and by the universe they mean the heavens—which they call Jupiter—and that is why Aratus, when about to speak of the heavens, says:

From Zeus be our beginnings. [Phaenomena 1]

[16] The Romans call the sun Liber, because he is free (*liber*) to wander—as Naevius⁷ puts it:

Here where the wandering sun flings loose his fiery reins and drives nearer to the earth.

[17] The Orphic verses, too, by calling the sun "Eubouleus," indicate that he is the patron of "good counsel"; for, if counsel is the

⁷ Laevius? See Ellis' note on Catullus 64. 271; and cf. 6. 5. 10 below.

offspring of the mind and if, in the opinion of our authorities, the sun is the mind of the universe from which the first beginning of intelligence is diffused among mankind, then the sun is rightly believed to preside over good counsel.

[18] In the line:

The sun, which men also call by name Dionysus
Orpheus manifestly declares that Liber is the sun, and the meaning here is certainly quite clear; but the following line from the same poet is more difficult:

One Zeus, one Hades, one Sun, one Dionysus.

[19] The warrant for this last line rests on an oracle of Apollo of Claros, wherein yet another name is given to the sun; which is called, within the space of the same sacred verses by several names, including that of Iao.⁸ For when Apollo of Claros was asked who among the gods was to be regarded as the god called Iao, he replied:

[20] Those who have learned the mysteries should hide the unsearchable secrets, but, if the understanding is small and the mind weak, then ponder this: that Iao is the supreme god of all gods; in winter, Hades; at spring's beginning, Zeus; the Sun in summer; and in autumn, the splendid Iao.

[21] For the meaning of this oracle and for the explanation, of the deity and his name, which identifies Iao with Liber Pater and the sun, our authority is Cornelius Labeo in his book entitled *On the Oracle of Apollo of Claros*.

[22] Again, Orpheus, pointing out that Liber and the sun are one and the same god, writes as follows of the ornaments and vestments worn by Liber at the ceremonies performed in his honor:

All these things duly perform right early, having arrayed the body of the god with his apparel, in imitation of the renowned sun. First, then, to represent the fiery rays cast about him a crimson robe, like to fire. Moreover, above it fasten on the right shoulder a broad, dappled skin of a fawn, the many-spotted hide of the beast, to represent the sparkling stars and the sacred sky. Then, over the fawn-skin cast a golden belt, all-gleaming, that he wear it around his breast, a mighty sign of the sun, when straightway he leaps up, shining, from the boundaries of earth and smites with his golden rays the stream of Ocean; and unspeakably great is his light, and mingled with

⁸ Perhaps a form of Jah; cf. Diodorus Siculus I. 94.

dew the light gleams at it wheels in eddies in a circle before the god. and as a belt below his measureless breast is seen the encircling Ocean, a great wonder to behold.

[23] Hence Vergil, too, knowing that Liber Pater is the sun and Ceres the moon, (the one by its gentle warmth at night,⁹ the other by its heat by day) together control the richness of the soil and the ripening of the crops, says:

[You, bright splendors of the World, most glorious, who guide the passage of the gliding year through the heavens, Liber and kindly Ceres] as surely as by your bounty the earth exchanged the Chaonian acorn for the rich ear of corn. [*Georgics* 1. 5]

[24] And later, the same poet has shown by an example taken from everyday life that the earth derives fertility from the sun, in the passage which begins:

Often, too, it is good to burn the barren fields¹⁰

[*Georgics* 1. 84-93]

for if, by man's invention, the application of fire is helpful in so many ways, how great then is the help to be ascribed to the heavenly heat of the sun?

⁹ But see 7. 16. 17-32 below.

¹⁰ See 5. 1. 14, below.

CHAPTER 19

[1] What we have said of Liber Pater goes to identify Mars with the sun, for we commonly associate Liber with Mars, suggesting thereby that they are one god. That is why Bacchus is called "Warlike," one of the names which properly belong to Mars. [2] Moreover, in a statue of Liber Pater worshiped by the Lacedaemonians the distinguishing emblem is not a thyrsus but a spear; and indeed the thyrsus which Liber carries is in fact a veiled weapon, its point being hidden by the encircling ivy, thus showing that any impulse to war should be restrained by the bonds, as it were, of patience, since it is the nature of ivy to bind and to restrain. Again, wine is the gift of Liber Pater and the heat engendered by wine often drives men on to madness and to battle. [3] The affinity, then, between the heat of wine and the heat of battle has led us to regard Mars and Liber as one and the same god. The Romans certainly pay reverence to each deity under the style of "Father," calling the one Liber Pater and the other Marspiter or Mars Pater. [4] And the fact that they have declared Liber Pater to be the founder of the triumph is a further proof that he is the Lord of Battles. Since, then, Liber Pater is to be identified with the sun, and Mars with Liber Pater, without doubt Mars is the sun. [5] And there is the further consideration that the Accitani, a people of Spain, worship with the greatest respect a statue of Mars which is adorned with rays, calling it Neton.

[6] Now a natural explanation unquestionably requires that the gods from whom springs the heat of heaven should differ in their names rather than in their real essence. And to the glowing heat by which the spirit is kindled and roused, sometimes to anger, sometimes to deeds of valor, and sometimes (in excess) to a temporary madness—and these are the causes which give birth to wars—to this property

men have given the name of Mars; the poet Homer too has expressed the violent might of the god, under the likeness of fire, in the line:

In his fury he was as Ares brandishing his spear, or as a
destroying fire [*Iliad* 15. 605]

so that, in short, one must maintain that the activity of the sun which fires the spirits and inflames the blood is called Mars.

[7] To prove that Mercury is the sun we have the support of our previous exposition, for the identification of Apollo with Mercury is clear from the fact that among many peoples the star Mercury is called Apollo and that, as Apollo presides over the Muses,¹ so speech, a function of the Muses, is bestowed by Mercury. [8] There are many further proofs, too, that Mercury is held to represent the sun. In the first place there is the fact that statues of Mercury are adorned with wings, a symbol of the swift movement of the sun; [9] for since we believe Mercury to rule over the mind and understand his name [Hermes] to be derived from the Greek word which means "to interpret" (ἐρμηνεύειν),² and since the sun is the mind of the universe—and nothing is swifter than the thoughts of the mind (just as Homer says, "swift as a bird or a thought")³—that is why Mercury is equipped with wings, as though possessing the very nature of the sun.

[10] Then a yet clearer statement of this proof comes from the Egyptians, for they give wings to their statues of the sun itself. These statues differ in color, one kind being dark and the other bright in appearance. The bright they call the sun "above" and the dark the sun "below," describing the sun as "below" when it is on its course in the lower hemisphere, that is to say, in the winter signs, and as "above" when it is moving round the summer sector of the zodiac. [11] A story of the same kind is told of Mercury, but in different words, for Mercury is thought to be the servant and messenger who passes between the gods above and the gods below.

[12] Mercury is also known as Argiphontes, not because he slew Argus—who is said to have had a number of eyes all round his head and to have been ordered by Juno to keep watch over her rival, the

¹ Macrobius *Commentary* 2. 3. 3.

² Cf. Plato *Cratylus* 407e and 1. 17. 5 above.

³ *Odyssey* 7. 36.

daughter of Inachus, after she had been changed into the likeness of a cow—but because in this myth Argus is the sky, stippled with shining stars which have the appearance of being, as it were, the eyes of heaven. [13] And indeed men came to call the sky Argus⁴ from its brightness and the speed of its movement, and it seems to keep watch from above over the earth, which in the hieroglyphic letters of the Egyptians is represented by a cow. The expanse of the sky, therefore, with its ornament of bright stars, is thought to have been killed by Mercury when, with the coming of the day, the sun dims the stars and takes them from the sight of men and thus seems to kill them by the power of its light.

[14] Statues of Mercury, too, commonly have the form of a square block, the only features being the head and the male member erect, this figure indicating that the sun is the head of the universe and the father of the world and that the whole power of the sun lies not in the services, so to speak, of the several limbs but in the mind alone, which has its seat in the head. [15] The block is made with four sides for the same reason that the four-stringed lyre also is believed to be an attribute of Mercury, the number four symbolizing either the four quarters of the world or the four seasons of the year or the arrangement of the zodiac into two equinoxes and two solstices—just as in the seven strings of Apollo's lyre we may see a reference to the movements of the seven celestial spheres, which nature has placed under the control of the sun.

[16] Another clear proof that it is the sun that we worship under the name of Mercury is the caduceus, which the Egyptians have designed as the sacred staff of Mercury. It shows a pair of serpents, male and female, intertwined; the middle parts of the serpents' coils are joined together as in a knot, called the knot of Hercules; their upper parts are bent into a circle and complete the circle as they meet in a kiss; below the knot their tails rejoin the staff at the point at which it is held, and at that point appear the wings with which they are provided. [17] The Egyptians also maintain that the attributes of the caduceus illustrate the generation, or "genesis" as it is called, of mankind; for they say that four deities are present to preside over a man's birth: his Genius, Fortune, Love, and Necessity. By the first two they understand the sun and the moon; for

⁴ I.e., ἀργός, "bright," and, in the phrase πόδας ἀργοί, "swift."

the sun, as the source of the breath of life and of heat and of light, is the creator and the guardian of a man's life and is therefore believed to be the Genius, or god, of a newborn child; the moon is Fortune, since she has charge of the body, and the body is at the mercy of the fickleness of change; the kiss of the serpents is the symbol of Love; and the knot is the symbol of Necessity. [18] Why wings are added has already been explained, and of the above-mentioned attributes the coiled bodies of the serpents have been specially chosen, as illustrating the serpentine course of each of the two stars.

CHAPTER 20

[1] The association of a serpent with the statues of Aesculapius and Salus points to the relation of these deities with the nature of the sun and the moon, for Aesculapius is the healthful power which comes from the essence of the sun to give help to mortal minds and bodies, and Salus is the activity proper to the nature of the moon, which aids the bodies of living creatures and strengthens them by its health-giving disposition.

[2] Statues of Aesculapius and Salus, then, have figures of serpents in attendance because these two deities enable human bodies, as it were, to slough off the skin of weakness and to recover the bloom of their former strength, just as serpents each year shed the skin of old age and renew their youth. And it is for this reason that the sun itself too is represented in the form of a serpent, because in its passage from the lowest point of its course to its height it always seems, as it were, to pass from the depth of old age and return to the vigor of youth.

[3] Moreover, since a serpent is called *draco* from the Greek word meaning "to see" (δέρκειν), the form of the name also explains why a serpent is one of the chief attributes which symbolize the sun, for with its keen and watchful eyesight the serpent is said to resemble the nature of the sun and for that reason to be entrusted with the charge of protecting temples, shrines, oracles, and treasuries.

[4] The identity of Aesculapius with Apollo is proved not only by the fact that he is believed to be Apollo's son, but also by reason of the power of prophecy which too is attributed to him. Thus Apollodorus in his work *On the Gods* writes that Aesculapius presides over divination and augury. [5] And there is nothing surprising here, since the skills of medicine and divination are closely

allied, for a doctor knows in advance what will be helpful or unhelpful in the body; just as Hippocrates says that a doctor should be able to describe his patient's present, past, and future state—or [in Vergil's words]:

To have knowledge of all things that are, or that have been, or that thereafter at their coming shall follow [*Georgics* 4. 393] and this agrees with the prophet's art which [as Homer has it] knows:

The things that are and that shall be and that have been afore-time.¹ [*Iliad* 1. 70]

[6] As for Hercules, he does not differ in essence from the sun, for he is that power of the sun which gives to the human race a valor after the likeness of that of the gods. And one must not suppose that Alcmena's son, born at Thebes in Boeotia, was the only one, or even the first one, to be called Hercules.² On the contrary, he had many predecessors and was the last to be deemed worthy of the honor of the name, having earned by his outstanding endurance the right to bear the style of the patron god of valor. [7] Besides, there is a religious cult of Hercules at Tyre too, although it is the Egyptians who worship him with the greatest reverence and respect and also from time out of mind (and yet recorded time with them is very long) pay homage to him as one who has no beginning in time.

[8] Hercules is also believed to have slain the Giants in defense of heaven, and he is thus the symbol of divine valor. As for the Giants, we must understand them to have been an impious breed of men who refused to recognize the existence of the gods and so were thought to have wished to drive them from their seat in heaven. [9] The serpents' coils at the end of the Giants' feet³ are a sign of their lack of upright and noble thought and of the downward tendency of the whole way and tenor of their life; and it was the sun that exacted the due penalty from them by the destructive power of its heat.

[10] That Hercules is indeed the sun is clear from his very name, for the derivation of his Greek name "Heracles" is obviously Ἡρακλῆος, the "Pride of the Air"—and what, pray, is the pride

¹ Cf. Hesiod *Theogony* 38.

² Cicero *De natura deorum* 3. 16. 42. Cf. 3. 12. 6 below.

³ Cf. Ovid *Fasti* 5. 37: *mille manus illis dedit et pro cruribus angues.*

of the air but the light of the sun, since, when the sun sets, the air is hidden in deep darkness? [11] Furthermore, the manifold forms of religious observances practiced by the Egyptians argue the manifold powers of the god and point to Hercules as the sun "which is in all and through all." [12] Another proof of this identification, and that no light proof, is provided by an event which occurred in another land. For when Theron, king of Hither Spain, was driven by a mad desire to capture the temple of Hercules [at Gades] and fitted out a fleet, the men of Gades sailed out to meet him with their ships of war. Battle was joined, and the issue of the fight was still undecided when the king's ships suddenly took to flight and at the same time burst into flames without warning and were consumed. The very few enemy survivors, who were taken prisoners, said that they had seen lions standing on the prows of the ships of Gades and that of a sudden their own ships had been set on fire by a discharge of rays like those which are represented surrounding the head of the sun.

[13] In the city on the borders of Egypt which boasts Alexander of Macedon as its founder, Sarapis and Isis are worshiped with a reverence that is almost fanatical. Evidence that the sun, under the name of Sarapis, is the object of all this reverence is either the basket set on the head of the god or the figure of a three-headed creature placed by his statue. The middle head of this figure, which is also the largest, represents a lion's; [14] on the right a dog raises its head with a gentle and fawning air; and on the left the neck ends in the head of a ravening wolf. All three beasts are joined together by the coils of a serpent whose head returns to the god's right hand which keeps the monster in check. [15] The lion's head, then, is a symbol of time present, which, midway between the past and the future, has the strength and ardor of immediate action; time past is represented by the head of the wolf, because the memory of things that are over and done is swiftly borne away; so too the likeness of a fawning dog indicates the issue of time to come, the object of our hopes, which are uncertain but flatter us. And indeed times and seasons are surely the servants of the power that creates them. As for the emblem of a basket on the head of the statue, this is a symbol of the height and a sign of the capacious power of the sun, for all earthly things return to the sun, carried thither by the heat which it sends forth.

[16] Now let me remind you of the words of an oracle touching the sun, or Sarapis. When Sarapis, whom the Egyptians have declared to be the greatest of the Gods, was asked by Nicocreon, king of the Cypriots, which of the gods he was held to be, he satisfied the king's religious scruples with the following lines:

[17] Learn that the nature of my godhead is such as I may tell thee: the firmament of heaven is my head; my belly the sea; the earth my feet; my ears are in the air; and the bright light of the sun is my far-flashing eye.⁴

[18] From these lines it is clear that the nature of Sarapis and of the sun is one and indivisible.

Isis is worshiped together with Sarapis; for Isis is the earth, or the world of nature, that lies beneath the sun; and so the whole body of the goddess is thickly covered with a series of breasts, because everything that exists draws its sustenance and nourishment from the earth or world of nature.

⁴ *The Oxford Book of Greek Verse*, ed. by G. Murray and others (Oxford, 1930), No. 482.

CHAPTER 21

[1] That Adonis too is the sun will be clear beyond all doubt if we examine the religious practices of the Assyrians, among whom Venus Architis and Adonis were worshiped of old with the greatest reverence, as they are by the Phoenicians today.

Physicists have given to the earth's upper hemisphere (part of which we inhabit) the revered name of Venus, and they have called the earth's lower hemisphere Proserpine. [2] Now six of the twelve signs of the zodiac are regarded as the upper signs and six as the lower, and so the Assyrians, or Phoenicians, represent the goddess Venus as going into mourning when the sun, in the course of its yearly progress through the series of the twelve signs, proceeds to enter the sector of the lower hemisphere. [3] For when the sun is among the lower signs, and therefore makes the days shorter, it is as if it had been carried off for a time by death and had been lost and had passed into the power of Proserpine, who, as we have said, is the deity that presides over the lower circle of the earth and the antipodes; so that Venus is believed to be in mourning then, just as Adonis is believed to have been restored to her when the sun, after passing completely through the six signs of the lower series, begins again to traverse the circle of our hemisphere, with brighter light and longer days.

[4] In the story which they tell of Adonis killed by a boar the animal is intended to represent winter, for the boar is an unkempt and rude creature delighting in damp, muddy, and frost-covered places and feeding on the acorn, which is especially a winter fruit. And so winter, as it were, inflicts a wound on the sun, for in winter we find the sun's light and heat ebbing, and it is an ebbing of light and heat that befalls all living creatures at death.

[5] On Mount Lebanon there is a statue of Venus. Her head is

veiled, her expression sad, her cheek beneath her veil is resting on her left hand; and it is believed that as one looks upon the statue it sheds tears. This statue not only represents the mourning goddess of whom we have been speaking but is also a symbol of the earth in winter; for at that time the earth is veiled in clouds, deprived of the companionship of the sun, and benumbed, its springs of water (which are, as it were, its eyes) flowing more freely and the fields meanwhile stripped of their finery—a sorry sight. [6] But when the sun has come up from the lower parts of the earth and has crossed the boundary of the spring equinox, giving length to the day, then Venus is glad and fair to see, the fields are green with growing crops, the meadows with grass and the trees with leaves. That is why our ancestors dedicated the month of April to Venus.

[7] In the same way the myths and religious ceremonies of the Phrygians, in spite of certain differences, give for our understanding a similar account of the Mother of the Gods and of Attis; [8] for the Mother of the Gods is beyond question to be regarded as the earth, and the impetuous strength and ardor of the lions which draw her car are properties of the sky which encloses and surrounds the air that carries the earth as in a car. [9] And to the sun, under the name of Attis, are given the emblems of a shepherd's pipe and a wand, the pipe indicating a series of uneven blasts (because the winds derive their properties and essential nature from the sun and do not blow with uniformity) and the wand declaring the power of the sun, which controls all things. [10] But that these ceremonies are to be regarded of referring chiefly to the sun can be inferred also from the fact that, by the usage of that people, on the eighth day before the Kalends of April, the "Descent" being ended and the symbolic mourning over, a period of rejoicing begins; and the day, as marking the time when the sun first makes the day longer than the night, is called the "Festival of Joy" (*Hilaria*).

[11] In Egypt too, although the names of the deities are different, there is a similar religious ceremony, in which Isis mourns for Osiris; for it is no secret that Osiris is none other than the sun and Isis, as we have said, none other than the earth or world of nature, and the explanation which applies to the rites of Adonis and Attis is applicable also to the Egyptian rites, to account for the alternations of sorrow and joy which accompany in turn the phases of the year. [12] Moreover, to show that by Osiris is meant the

sun, whenever the Egyptians wish to represent the god in their hieroglyphic letters they engrave a scepter and in it portray the representation of an eye. This is their sign for Osiris, and by it they indicate that this god is the sun, which with royal power looks down upon the world from on high. And indeed in ancient usage the sun is called the eye of Jupiter.

[13] Among the Egyptians Apollo (and he is the sun) is called Horus—whence the name “hours” (*horae*) has been given to the twenty-four divisions which make up a day and a night and to the four seasons [ὥραι] which together complete the cycle of the year. [14] It has also been a practice of the Egyptians, when they wish to dedicate a statue of the sun under its own name, to represent it with the head shaved except on the right side, where the hair is allowed to remain. The hair that is kept shows that the sun is never hidden from the world of nature, and the retention of the roots after the locks have been shorn indicates that it is an essential property of the sun, even when it is invisible to us, to reappear like those locks. [15] This same attribute of a half-shorn head is also a symbol of the time when the light is reduced and when the sun, as though shorn of its growth and with a mere stubble, so to speak, remaining, comes to the shortest day (which the men of old called the winter solstice, using the word *bruma* for winter, from the shortness of the day, as though to say “short day.”¹ But when the sun rises again from its narrow retreat, it reaches out to the summer hemisphere, growing in strength as though by a process of birth, and it is believed to have come then into its own realm. [16] That is why, among the signs of the zodiac, the Egyptians have dedicated an animal, the lion, in that part of the heavens where in its yearly course the sun’s powerful heat is hottest. And the Sign of the Lion there they call “The House of the Sun,”² because a lion seems to derive its essential qualities from the natural properties of the sun. [17] For, in the first place, the lion by its energy and ardor surpasses other animals as the sun surpasses the rest of the stars. And then, just as a lion’s strength is in its breast and in the front part of its body, but its hinder limbs are weaker, so the might

¹ Varro *De lingua Latina* 6. 8: *bruma quod brevissimus tunc dies est*; Festus, p. 28: *bruma a brevitatem dierum dicta*; Isidore of Seville 5. 35. 6: *bruma . . . quasi βραχύς, id est brevis*.

² Aelian *De natura animalium* 12. 7.

of the sun grows more powerful from the first part of the day up to noon or from the first part of the year, that is from the spring, to summer; but afterward the sun grows weaker, as it declines to its setting (which would seem to be the hinder part of the day) or to the winter (the hinder part of the year). And the lion, too, always gazes with open fiery eyes, just as the sun regards the earth with the continuous and unwearied gaze of its open fiery eye.

[18] Again, not only the Lion, but every one of the signs of the zodiac as well, may properly be related to natural attributes of the sun. To begin with the Ram: the affinity here is well marked, for throughout the six winter months a ram lies on its left side and after the spring equinox on its right,³ just as the sun too from that same time traverses the right [or summer] hemisphere and then, for the rest of the year, the left [or winter] hemisphere. [19] And that too is why Ammon, the god whom the Libyans identify with the setting sun, is represented by them as wearing a ram's horns, for a ram's strength lies chiefly in its horns, as the sun's strength lies in its rays; for among the Greeks also the animal is called κριοῦς, from the word κῆρυξ [i.e., head].⁴

[20] As for the Bull, the religious practices of the Egyptians show in many ways its connection with the sun—that is to say, either because at Heliopolis high honors are paid to a bull dedicated, under the name of Mnevis, to the sun; or because in the city of Memphis the ox Apis is received as the sun; or because in the town of Hermunthis, in the splendid temple of Apollo there, they worship a bull called Bacis, which is dedicated to the sun and is remarkable for certain strange properties consistent with the nature of the sun, [21] for men affirm that this bull changes color hourly, and the thick bristles of its coat are said to grow in the direction opposite to the natural growth in all other beasts, so that the animal is thought to be, as it were, an image of the sun, whose movement is opposite to that of the heavens.⁵

[22] The Twins, who are believed to die and to come to life again in turn, surely represent the sun which, ever one and the same, now descends to the lowest parts of the world and now rises again to the highest.

³ Aelian *De natura animalium* 10. 18.

⁴ Recte κῆρυξ, "horn"?

⁵ See Macrobius *Commentary* 1. 18. 1.

[23] The sidelong movement of the Crab unquestionably illustrates the march of the sun, whose lot it is never to follow a straight path but always [in the words of Vergil]:

That by which the system of the Signs might slant and turn.

[*Georgics* 1. 239]

And we should note in particular that it is in the sign of the Crab that the sun begins to move sideways from the upper part of its course and now to make for the parts below.

Of the Lion we have spoken already.

[24] The Virgin, with an ear of corn in her hand, certainly represents that power of the sun which has the fruits of the earth in its care. And she is on that account regarded as a symbol of Justice, by which alone these fruits as they come to birth are preserved for the use of men.

[25] The Scorpion—in its entirety, for this sign includes the Balance—presents a picture of the sun's nature. It is sluggish in winter but, when winter is past, by its own strength again erects its sting, its nature none the worse for the winter sluggishness.

[26] The Archer is the lowest and last of all the houses of the zodiac. His upper parts therefore are those of a man, but he sinks to the form of a beast in his lower limbs, as though thrust down from the heights to the depths by his hinder parts. Nevertheless the arrow which he shoots shows that the sun's rays, even when the sun is on its way from the lowest part of its course, are the universal source of life.

Capricorn, bringing the sun back from the lower to the upper parts of its course, seems to imitate the nature of the goat, the creature which, moving as it feeds from the lowest parts, always grazes on the high peaks of the rocks.⁶

[27] The Water-Bearer indicates the essential force of the sun, for assuredly rain would not fall upon the earth unless the heat of the sun first drew the moisture up on high, to pour it down again in abundant showers.

Placed at the end of the series of the signs of the zodiac are the Fishes. They are dedicated to the sun not, as with the rest of the signs, because their nature in any way represents the nature of the

⁶ Cf. 1. 17. 63 above and 1. 22. 6 below.

sun, but as illustrating its power, since the sun gives life not only to creatures of the air and of the land but also to those which, as though exiled from the sun and removed from its sight, have their being in the depths of the waters. For such is the sun's might that its penetrating rays quicken even what is hidden from its view.

CHAPTER 22

[1] To return to our discussion of the manifold power of the sun, Nemesis, which we worship to keep us from pride, is none other than that power of the sun whose nature it is to make dark the things that are bright and withdraw them from our sight and to give light to things that are in darkness and bring them before our eyes.

[2] The attributes with which Pan (or Inuus, as he is called) is represented enable those who are the better endowed with understanding to perceive that he himself is the sun. [3] The Arcadians in their worship of him call him "the Lord of the ὕλη"¹ meaning to indicate, not that he is the lord of the forest but the ruler of all material substance; and the power of this matter is the essential component of all bodies that exist, whether celestial bodies or bodies terrestrial. [4] The horns, then, and the long, hanging beard of Inuus are symbols of the nature of the light by which the sun illumines the expanse of sky above and brings brightness to the parts that lie below, so that Homer says of the sun:

Dawn rose, to bring light to immortals and to mortal men.

[*Iliad* 11. 2; 19. 2; *Odyssey* 5. 2]

And as for Pan's pipe and wand, we have explained their meaning already, in our discussion of the attributes of Attis. [5] The explanation of the attribute of goat's feet is to be found in the fact that matter, under the regulation of the sun, goes to the making of all substance and that after the divine bodies have been formed from it, it finally becomes the first principle of the earth. [6] A goat's feet were chosen to symbolize this ending because the goat

¹ ὕλη meaning (a) "forest" and (b) "matter".

is a creature of the earth but yet always moves upward as it feeds,² just as the sun, whether it is sending its rays down to earth from above is preparing to rise again, is seen to shine on the mountains.

[7] Echo is believed to be the darling of Inuus and the object of his love—Echo beheld by no man's eyes but the symbol of the harmony of the heavens—and this harmony is dear to the sun as the ruler of all the spheres whence the harmony is born—a harmony, however, which can never be perceived by our senses.

[8] And Saturn himself, the author of times and seasons (and therefore, by the change of a letter, called Κρόνος by the Greeks as though for χρόνος, time³), must assuredly be understood to be the sun; since there is handed down a regular succession of first principles, a succession separated by the multitude of times and seasons, made visible by light, bound together in an everlasting bond, and distinguished by our sense of sight, wherein we see everywhere the action of the sun.

² Cf. I. 17. 63 and I. 21. 26 above.

³ Cf. I. 8. 6 above.

CHAPTER 23

[1] Even Jupiter himself, the king of the gods, does not, it seems, rank higher than the sun, but there are clear signs that he and the sun are, in their nature, one and the same, for in the following lines of Homer,

Yesterday Zeus went to Ocean, to the noble Ethiopians, for a banquet, and all the gods followed him, but on the twelfth he will return to Olympus [*Iliad* 1. 423]

[2] the name of Jupiter, according to Cornificius, is understood to stand for the sun, to which the water of Ocean serves, so to speak, a banquet. For, as Posidonius and Cleanthes affirm, the sun in its course does not leave the so-called "torrid" zone, because Ocean, which encircles and divides the earth, flows beneath that zone; and, moreover, it is well known, on the authority of all the physicists, that heat draws its sustenance from moisture.

[3] Homer's words: "All the gods followed him," refer to the constellations which by the daily motion of the heavens are borne, together with the sun, to their settings and risings and are nourished by the same moisture as the sun. For the constellations and the stars are called "gods" because the word θεός is derived from θέειν,¹ that is "to run," since they are always in motion, or else from θεωρεῖσθαι, since they are the objects of "contemplation."

[4] When the poet goes on to say: "On the twelfth he will return," by "twelfth" he is indicating not a number of days but the number of hours after which the heavenly bodies return to their rising in the upper hemisphere.

[5] We are also to understand the following passage from Plato²

¹ Plato *Cratylus* 397d.

² *Phaedrus* 246e.

to have the same meaning: "The great leader in heaven, Zeus, driving a winged chariot, goes first, setting all things in order and providing for them. He is followed by a host of gods and spirits, marshaled in eleven squadrons; and Hestia alone remains in the house of the gods." By these words Plato wishes it to be understood that the sun, under the name of Jupiter, is the great leader in heaven, and the reference to the winged chariot indicates the speed of the sun's motion. [6] And since the sun, in whatever sign it happens to be, is supreme over all the signs and constellations and the gods that preside over the signs, it seems therefore to precede and lead all the gods, ordering and providing for all things; so that the rest of the gods, forming at it were its army, are held to be disposed among eleven of the signs, because the sun itself, in whatever sign it be, occupies the place of the twelfth.

[7] Plato refers to spirits (*daemones*: δαίμονες) and gods, jointly by name, either because gods are δαήμονες,³ that is to say "gifted with knowledge of the future," or, as Posidonius writes in his work *On Heroes and Spirits*, because their nature springs from and shares in the heavenly substance—this word for spirits being then derived from δαιόμενος, which may mean either "burning" or "sharing."

[8] The additional words: "Hestia alone remains in the house of the gods," mean that she (whom we understand to be the earth) alone remains motionless within the house of the gods, that is to say, in the midst of the universe, as Euripides says:⁴

And thee, O Mother Earth—and the Wise among men call thee
Hestia—as thou sittest in the ether.

[9] The following lines from other sources serve to show how we are to regard the relationship of the sun and Jupiter:

The all-seeing and all-comprehending eye of Zeus

[Hesiod *Opera et dies* 267]

and

O Sun, who dost watch over all things and hear all things.

[*Iliad* 3. 277]

From these lines it is clear that both Jupiter and the sun are to be regarded as the manifestation of a single power.

³ *Cratylus* 398b. Cf. Isidore of Seville 8. 11. 15: *daemones a Graecis dictos aiunt, quasi δαήμονας, id est peritos ac rerum scios.*

⁴ Fragment 938 (Nauck).

[10] The Assyrians too, in a city called Heliopolis,⁵ worship the sun with an elaborate ritual under the name of Jupiter, calling him "Zeus of Heliopolis." The statue of the god was brought from the Egyptian town also called Heliopolis, when Senemur (who was perhaps the same as Senepos) was king of Egypt. It was taken to Assyria first (by Opias the ambassador of Delebor, king of the Assyrians, and by Egyptian priests the chief of whom was Partemetis), and, after it had been for some time in Assyria, it was later moved to Heliopolis. [11] Why this was done and how it came about that, after leaving Egypt, the statue has reached the place where it now is and is worshiped with Assyrian rather than with Egyptian rites I have omitted to mention, because the matter has no bearing on our present topic. [12] However, the identification of this god with Jupiter and with the sun is clear from the form of the ceremonial and from the appearance of the statue.

The statue, a figure of gold in the likeness of a beardless man, presses forward with the right hand raised and holding a whip, after the manner of a charioteer; in the left hand are a thunderbolt and ears of corn; and all these attributes symbolize the conjoined power of Jupiter and the sun.

[13] The temple is held in remarkable awe too as the seat of an oracle, such divination pointing to a faculty of Apollo, who is identified with the sun. For the statue of the god of Heliopolis is borne in a litter, as the images of the gods are carried in the procession at the Circensian Games, and the bearers are generally the leading men of the province. These men, with their heads shaved, and purified by a long period of abstinence, go as the spirit of the god moves them and carry the statue not of their own will but whithersoever the god directs them, just as at Antium we see the images of the two goddesses of Fortune move forward to give their oracles.⁶

[14] The god is also consulted from a distance, by the sending of sealed letters, and he replies, in order, to the matters contained in the question put to him. So it was that the emperor Trajan, too, when he was about to march with his army from the province of Syria into Parthia, was urged by friends of the most steadfast piety,

⁵ Baalbec (Pliny *Historia naturalis* 5. 18. 80). See review of Ronzevalle's *Jupiter Héliopolitain* in *Journal of Roman Studies*, XXVIII, Pt. 1 (1938), 87.

⁶ Cf. Lucian *De dea Syria* 36. Martial (5. 1. 3) refers to the two goddesses of Fortune worshipped at Antium as the "soothsaying sisters."

who had had reliable experience of the power of the god, to consult him about the issue of the undertaking. With typically Roman prudence the emperor, by a preliminary test of the trustworthiness of the oracle, took steps to thwart the possibility of hidden human trickery,⁷ and began by sending sealed tablets with a request for a written reply. [15] To the surprise of the priests, who were, of course, unaware of the nature of the emperor's tablets, the god bade a sheet of papyrus be brought and ordered it to be sealed, without any writing on it, and dispatched. When Trajan received the document he was filled with astonishment, since the tablets which he had sent to the god also had had no writing on them; [16] and he then wrote and sealed other tablets, to ask whether he would return to Rome after the war was over. The god thereupon bade a centurion's vine branch be brought from among the dedicated offerings in the temple, broken in pieces, and the pieces wrapped in a napkin and sent thus to the emperor. When Trajan's bones were brought back to Rome after his death the meaning of the oracle's response was clear, for the emperor's remains resembled the pieces of the vine branch, and the vine branch itself [as a centurion's staff] indicated the time of the event which would befall [namely, in time of war].

[17] That the discourse may not wander too far afield, by mentioning all the gods by name, let me tell you what the Assyrians believe about the sovereignty of the sun. To the god whom they revere as highest and greatest of the gods they have given the name of Adad, a name which, being interpreted, means "One One." [18] Him, then, they worship as the most powerful god, but they associate with him a goddess called Adargatis,⁸ and to these two deities, by whom they understand the sun and the earth, they ascribe full power over all things. And, instead of using a number of names to express the power shared by these deities in all its forms, they indicate the manifold pre-eminence of this twofold godhead by the attributes which each deity bears. [19] These attributes of themselves tell of the nature of the sun; for the statue of Adad is distinguished by rays which point downward, to show that the might of heaven is in the rays which pour down from the

⁷ For an example of such trickery, see Lucian *Alexander* 19-21.

⁸ Cf. Pliny *Historia naturalis* 5. 19. 81; and for Adad 37. 71. 186.

sun to the earth, but the statue of Adargatis is distinguished by rays which point upward, to show that everything that the earth brings forth owes its birth to the power of the rays sent from above. [20] Under the statue of Adargatis are figures of lions, to indicate that the goddess represents the earth, on the same principle as that by which the Phrygians have represented the Mother of the Gods, that is to say, the earth, in a car drawn by lions.

[21] Finally, the theologians point out that the sovereignty of the sun answers to the sum of all the powers that be, and this is shown by the short prayer which they use in their ritual, saying:

O Sun, Ruler of all, Spirit of the world, Might of the world,
Light of the world.

[22] And in the following verses Orpheus too bears witness to the all-embracing nature of the sun:

Hear, O Thou who dost, wheeling afar, ever make the turning
circle of thy rays to revolve in its heavenly orbits, bright Zeus
Dionysus, Father of sea, Father of land, Sun, source of all life,
all-gleaming with thy golden light.

CHAPTER 24

[1] As Praetextatus ended his discourse, the company for a while regarded him in wide-eyed wonder and amazement. Then one of the guests began to praise his memory, another his learning, and all his knowledge of the observances of religion; for he alone, they declared, knew the secrets of the nature of godhead, he alone had the intelligence to apprehend the divine and the ability to expound it. [2] But Evangelus interrupted, saying: I am certainly full of admiration for a capacity to understand the powers of all those mighty deities, but to call on our poet of Mantua to corroborate every statement in a theological exposition would seem to suggest partiality rather than a reasoned judgment. [3] For my part, should I not take it that Vergil was imitating some other poet when he referred to the sun and moon as "Liber and kindly Ceres," hearing the names so used but not knowing why? [4] Unless, perhaps, just as the Greeks are immoderate in their praise of all that is Greek, we too would turn even our poets into philosophers, although Cicero himself, who maintained that he was as devoted to philosophy as to oratory, cannot discuss the nature of the gods or fate, or divination, without impairing his reputation as an orator, by his unmethodical treatment of these subjects.

[5] Cicero, replied Symmachus, is proof against your criticism, Evangelus, but we shall consider him later.¹ At present we are concerned with Vergil, and I should be glad if you would tell us whether, in your judgment, his works are fit only for the instruction of schoolboys, or whether you would admit that their contents can serve higher ends; for it seems to me that for you Vergil's verse

¹ Perhaps an indication that the *Saturnalia* was written before the *Commentary*.

is, still, what it was for the rest of us in boyhood, when our masters would read it to us and we would recite it to them.

[6] I should rather put it this way, Symmachus, said Evangelus. When we were boys we had an uncritical admiration for Vergil, because our masters, as well as the inexperience of our youth, did not allow us to see his faults. That he had faults no one can honestly deny. In fact he admitted as much himself, for on his deathbed he bequeathed his *Aeneid* to the flames; and why should he have done this unless he was anxious to keep from posterity something which he knew would damage his reputation? [7] And how right he was! For he was ashamed to think what the verdict on him would be, if any should come to read of a goddess begging from her only husband—and that a husband by whom, as well she knew, she had not had a child—a gift of arms for her son, or if countless other passages should come to light in which the poet had offended against good taste—whether by his use of Greek and outlandish expressions or by the faulty arrangement of his work.

[8] All shuddered as they heard these words, and Symmachus retorted: Vergil's renown, Evangelus, is such that no one can add to it by praise or detract from it by disparagement. And, as for your carping criticisms, anyone from the lowest ranks of the grammarians can answer them, so that there is no need to put our friend Servius, who, to my mind, surpasses the teachers of former times in learning, to the trouble of rebutting such charges. But since, outstanding poet though he is, his poetic skill displeases you, tell me whether his rhetorical powers meet with your approval, for they are very great.

[9] Evangelus at first smiled but then replied: True indeed! All that remains for you people to do now is to proclaim Vergil an orator as well. And I am not surprised, for not so long ago you were canvassing his promotion to a place among the philosophers.

[10] If, in your opinion, said Symmachus, Vergil should be regarded as having no thought for anything but poetry (although you go so far as to grudge him the name of poet), listen to what he has himself to say about the many kinds of learning which his work entailed. For there is a letter² of his, addressed to Augustus, which begins with these words: [11] "I am getting many letters

² Perhaps a reply to the letters from Augustus to which Suetonius refers in his life of Vergil (31).

from you" (and goes on) "as for my Aeneas, if I now had anything worthy of your attention, I should gladly send it; but the subject on which I have embarked is so vast that I think I must have been almost mad to have entered upon it; all the more so since, as you know, there are other and much more important studies which claim from me a share in the work." [12] What Vergil says here is consistent with that wealth of material which almost all the literary critics carelessly pass by with (as the proverb says) "dusty feet"³—as though a grammarian were permitted to understand nothing beyond the meanings of words. Thus those fine fellows have set hard and fast bounds to their science, like the tracts fixed and defined by the augurs; and, if anyone were to dare to overstep these prescribed limits, he would have to be deemed guilty of as heinous an offense as if he had peered into the temple from which all males are banned.⁴ [13] But we, who claim to have a finer taste, shall not suffer the secret places of this sacred poem to remain concealed, but we shall examine the approaches to its hidden meanings and throw open its inmost shrine for the worship of the learned. [14] I should be sorry to seem to be anxious to undertake the whole work single-handed, and I propose therefore only to point out the most forcible of the rhetorical devices and conceits that are to be found in Vergil's work,⁵ leaving Eusebius, that most eloquent of orators, to deal with Vergil's skill in oratory, a theme which—thanks to his learning, and experience as a teacher—he will handle better than I. As for the rest of you here, I would earnestly beg that each of you contribute, as it were to a common feast, anything that he may have noted as particularly striking about the poet's genius.

[15] These words aroused great, and general, enthusiasm, each of the company wishing to hear the others and overlooking the fact that he too would himself be called on to make a like contribution. Mutual encouragement led to ready and willing assent, and, turning to Praetextatus, all begged him to give his opinion first, to be followed by the rest in the order in which they happened to be sitting.⁶

³ Cf. Aulus Gellius 1. 9. 8 and 17. 5. 14.

⁴ The temple of the *Bona Dea*.

⁵ In the last part (now lost) of Book 4. See 5. 1. 1.

⁶ For the customary arrangement of the conversation at a *convivium* see Cicero *De senectute* 14. 46. Cf. 7. 11. 1, below.

[16] Of all the high qualities for which Vergil is praised, said Vettius, my constant reading of his poems leads me, for my part, to admire the great learning with which he has observed the rules of the pontifical law in many different parts of his work. One might well suppose that he had made a special study of this law, and if my discourse does not prove unequal to so lofty a topic, I undertake to show that our Vergil may fairly be regarded as a Pontifex Maximus.⁷

[17] Flavianus was the next to speak. I find in our poet, he said, such knowledge of augural law⁸ that, even if he were unskilled in all other branches of learning, the exhibition of this knowledge alone would win him high esteem.

[18] I, added Eustathius, should give the highest praise to his use of Greek models⁹—a cautious use and one which may even have the appearance of being accidental, since he sometimes skillfully conceals the debt, although at other times he imitates openly—did I not admire even more his knowledge of astronomy and of the whole field of philosophy,⁸ and the sparing and restrained way in which he makes occasional, and everywhere praiseworthy, use of this knowledge in his poems.

[19] Furius Albinus was placed on the other side of Praetextatus, and next to him Caecina. Both spoke highly of the way in which Vergil strove to profit by the work of earlier writers, Furius referring to lines and passages,¹⁰ Caecina to single words.¹¹

[20] Avienus said: I shall not take it upon myself to dare to praise any single virtue in Vergil's work, but I shall listen to what the rest of you have to say, and, if any remark of yours or anything in my long reading of the poet suggests an observation, I shall make it, as the occasion for it may arise. But bear in mind that it is to our friend Servius that we must go for an explanation of any obscurity, since of all literary critics he is far the greatest.¹²

[21] These proposals were unanimously accepted, and Praetextatus, seeing that all were looking toward him, said: Philosophy, the

⁷ Book 3. 1-12; cf. Sainte-Beuve, *Étude sur Virgile*, Chap. 4.

⁸ The discourse of Flavianus on Vergil's knowledge of augural law and that of Eustathius on Vergil's knowledge of astronomy and philosophy have not survived. Quintilian (1. 4. 4) insists that a knowledge of astronomy and philosophy is necessary for the understanding of poetry.

⁹ Book 5. 2-22. ¹⁰ Book 6. 1-3. ¹¹ Book 6. 4-5.

¹² Book 6. 6-9.

discipline of disciplines, is the gods' unequalled gift to man. It must therefore have the honor of being our first topic.¹³ Let Eustathius remember, then, that all other discourses give place to his and that he is to open the discussion. You, Flavianus, will follow him. I shall find it refreshing to listen to the two of you, and some respite from talking will enable me to recover strength to speak.

[22] Meanwhile the head slave (whose duty it was to burn incense before the household gods, to arrange for the provision of food, and to direct the tasks of the domestic servants) had come to inform his master that the household staff had finished the customary yearly feast; [23] for in houses where religious usages are observed it is the practice at the Saturnalia to compliment the slaves by first providing for them a dinner prepared as though for the master, and it is not until this meal is over that the table is spread again for the head of the household. And so it was that the chief servant entered to announce the hour of dinner and to summon the masters to it. [24] Then, said Praetextatus, our friend Vergil must be kept for a more suitable time of day, and let us devote a fresh morning to a systematic examination of his poetry. Now the hour reminds us that my table is to have the honor of your company. But Eustathius, and after him Nicomachus, must not forget that at tomorrow's discussion the duty of speaking first is reserved for them.

[25] My meeting with you all, added Flavianus, is in accordance with the ruling which we have already approved, that my household gods are to have the privilege and pleasure of entertaining this distinguished gathering tomorrow. All agreed, and they went in to dinner in high spirits, recalling to one another with approval the topics which they had debated together.

¹³ John of Salisbury 8. 9 (741d).

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